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BIBLE AS LITERATURE

BY

PROF. RICHARD G. MOULTON, PH.D.
PROF. A. B. BRUCE, D.D.
AND OTHERS

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INTRODUCTION.

THERE are two ways in which we may approach the Bible: the theological and the literary. We may assume that God has given us a revelation, we may conclude that a revelation from a God of truth must be altogether true, with no element of error in it; and then taking up the Bible we may make it our duty to reconcile all its teachings with this assumption. Or we may take it up without any prior assumption, we may re-examine it, — the date, authorship, and contents of its various books, — to ascertain what is apparently the truth concerning it; and from this examination we may form a judgment as to whether it is inspired by God and contains a revelation from Him, in what sense and to what degree it is inspired, and how far and on what subjects it is a revelation. The first I call the theological

method, the second the literary method. The former method has been a not uncommon one; the latter is both the more scientific and the more reverent. It is not for us to determine what kind of a revelation a God of truth must be supposed to have given us and then deduce the character of the Bible from that determination. It is for us to see what kind of a revelation He has given us, and to accept that gift humbly, reverently, thankfully.

When in this spirit we take up the Bible to examine it, we discover at once that it is not a book but a library; that it is composed of sixty-six different books bound up together; that they were apparently written by forty or more different authors; that they were written at different epochs, for different readers, under widely different circumstances; and that more than twice as many years elapsed between the first and the last writing as elapsed between the writing of Chaucer's poems and the writing of Tennyson's.[1]

[1] I assume, as it is quite safe to do, that the substance of the Book of the Covenant, including the Ten Commandments (Exodus xx. 1–xxiv. 7), dates from the days of Moses, and that the Gospel of John was written at the close of the first century of the Christian Era.

We further discover that it contains many different types of literature. Genesis is a collection of pre-historic narratives; Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy a collection of ancient laws, civil and ecclesiastical, embedded in history; Kings and Chronicles a series of historical records; Ruth an idyl of the common people; Esther an historical romance of court life; Job an "epic of the inner life;"[1] the Psalms a Hebrew Hymnal for Church and home worship; Proverbs a collection of wise sayings of many authors; the Song of Songs a drama of love strong under temptation; Ecclesiastes a poem, illustrating the "two voices" which are ever appearing in conflicting interpretations of human life, — the interpretation of cynicism, and that of faith and hope; and finally the books of the prophets, — volumes of sermons, chiefly on national affairs, by the great preachers of this peculiar people. And we also discover that in all these various ages and writers and forms of literature there is a common spirit and to a certain extent a common message. These books are bound together not merely by binders' thread, but by an intellectual and spiritual unity,

[1] So admirably entitled by Professor Genung.

which is the more remarkable since it appears in authors who write without concurrence of conscious design and without similarity in training, circumstance, or temperament. Legend, law, history, poetry, fiction, philosophy, preaching, — a common spirit pervades them all, a common purpose animates them all. We also discover that the spirit is not equally luminous, nor the purpose equally strong, nor the message equally clear in all; that between the doctrine of Joshua, "The Lord is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins," and that of the Psalter, "He forgiveth all thine iniquities, He healeth all thy diseases; He redeemeth thy life from destruction," there is a very apparent contradiction. In brief, we discover that there is in this literature, as in all literature, a growth in clearness of apprehension and of expression; that the light of this Hebrew anthology is one which "shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

One who has been accustomed to consider the Bible from the theological point of view finds two serious difficulties in the literary point of view. It seems to him at first irreverent, and indeed inconsistent with any theory of inspiration, to suppose

that the Bible contains legends and traditions, drama and fiction, in short, *belles lettres*, as well as history and law; and if he overcomes this difficulty, he halts at a second: How is he to know what is wholly true and what is only partially true, what is the word of God and what the human husk which contains it?

The first difficulty is a product of Puritan intellectual habits. The Puritan was essentially prosaic. He looked with suspicion on the great poet who belonged to his own school, — Milton, — and he condemned unsparingly the still greater poet who did not, — Shakespeare. He disapproved of fiction, for he confounded fact and truth, and thought nothing could be true which was not fact. He therefore reprobated all novels, tales, and dramas as essentially dangerous if not essentially vicious; and of course he could not imagine that the Bible contained such elements of peril to the soul. We no longer entertain his opinion as to secular literature; we honor poetry, fiction, and the drama: and therefore we have not his reason for imagining that they are excluded from the Bible. The sacred writers did not themselves confine their idea of divine inspiration to special

forms of life. The artificer of the Temple was regarded as inspired no less than the giver of the law; [1] the sacred song no less than the sermon.[2] That conception of inspiration which supposes that it is confined to historians, biographers, and lawgivers, that conception of revelation which supposes that it is made only through the record of facts, is certainly narrower than that which supposes that God inspires the imagination as well as the reason, the poet and the romance-writer as well as the historian and the preacher, that, as He has made all human faculties, so He uses all to make Himself known to His children. He who has read the charming letters of Phillips Brooks to children will recognize that a man may reveal himself as truly by the very frolics of imagination as by serious counsel. And what is true of man is equally true of God. Some of Christ's most eloquent instructions were afforded through fiction,—the parables; why should we suppose that God disdained to use in the Old Testament what Christ used freely in the New Testament?

The other difficulty equally disappears if we look in the Bible to see what it says about itself. It

[1] Exod. xxxv. 30–35. [2] Luke i. 67.

declares of itself that it is a hidden treasure. We must search for it, as men search for a hidden treasure, and must ourselves separate the gold from the alloy. It is not mined, coined, minted, and delivered to us with the King's stamp on it. The mining, coining, and assaying of it are left for us to do. And this because we can come to a real knowledge of the truth only by this very process. A revelation of truth which exempted us from toil and research, and released us from intellectual and moral responsibility, would be no revelation at all. It is by the exercise of moral discrimination that we gain the power to discriminate.

There are three very simple principles which the student of the Bible should ever bear in mind in this process of Bible study; they will save him from falling into an error which has not been uncommon and which has proved a cause of great and needless perplexity. There is no room here either to elaborate or to demonstrate these principles: I can only state and briefly apply them. The first is that the Bible does not contain and does not purport to contain a revelation of all truth; it affords simply a revelation or unveiling of God. The second is that this revelation or unveil-

ing of God reaches its consummation in the life, teaching, and above all in the character of Jesus Christ, who is God manifest in the flesh. The third is that this revelation of God is not made exclusively in the Bible: it is made also in Nature, in Providence, and in our own spiritual consciousness. It is for us so to interpret the Bible that these three shall agree. Anything in the Bible which is inconsistent with the character and teachings of Christ may be safely regarded as in so far human, fallible, and imperfect. If, for example, Christ tells us to love our enemies, and pray for them who despitefully use us, and we find in the Old Testament a Psalm which pronounces a blessing on him "that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones," we may be perfectly sure that the latter is not a revelation of the divine spirit. It is rather a revelation of that spirit from which Christ has come to deliver us. Anything in the Bible which clearly contradicts the unquestionable facts of Nature we may be equally sure is an imperfect interpretation of the divine method in Nature. Our system of astronomy is to be derived from the stars, not from the Bible, and if they conflict we are to correct the Bible by the stars, not

the stars by the Bible. Finally, God does not speak contradictory things, one to each individual through his conscience, the other to humanity through an ancient record. When these seem to conflict we must follow the voice which is within rather than the voice which is without. We must so interpret what ancient men tell us they understood God's voice to be as not to make it contradict what God's voice plainly and clearly says to us. We may and often ought to hold our own moral judgments in abeyance, until we have given the question which perplexes us further study and consideration. But what, after the fullest and most conscientious consideration appears to us to be our duty, must be taken by us as a divine direction, and whatever in the words of others contradicts this inward monitor, we must either believe we do not understand or we must believe to be erroneous. In a word, we must either think we do not understand the interpreter or else that he did not understand God.

With these reflections on the spirit with which the Bible is to be studied and used, and with the profound conviction that the more free our study the more sacred the book will become to us, I

heartily commend to the reader this little volume as a valuable aid to the better understanding of the Bible. The more thoroughly and freely the human life and character of the sacred writers and their immediate auditors is studied, the clearer to the student will be the revelation of God afforded by the writings, — a revelation unparalleled for its strength and beauty by any other of the world literatures.

LYMAN ABBOTT.

THE BIBLE AS LITERATURE.

I.

THE BIBLE AS LITERATURE.[1]

By PROF. RICHARD G. MOULTON, PH. D.
Of the University of Chicago, and Cambridge University, England.

ONE of our old dramas bears the somewhat remarkable title, "A Woman Killed with Kindness." It would seem as if a similarly constructed title might well describe the Bible in the hands of its English readers; it is a "Literature Smothered by Reverence." Of course, as a source of spiritual life the sacred Word has its full vitality and vitalizing force. But the Bible is something besides this; the very name "Bible" may be translated "Literature," and, considered as literature, it must be confessed that the Bible is exercising little influence upon those to whom it is familiar. Moreover, it would seem that it has been reduced to this state of inanition through an extreme reverence, which, being divorced from intelligence,

[1] Professor Moulton's work, "The Literary Study of the Bible" (D. C. Heath & Co.) is designed as a text-book to the general subject.

has proved mischievous. It has been felt that, in the case of so transcendent a message, the very sentences containing it were sacred. But, in thus doing homage to the separate sentences, readers have lost that linking between sentences and sentences which gave to them all their real force; to the devout reader the Bible has become a store-house of isolated texts, of good words. He scarcely realizes that it exhibits the varieties of literary form familiar to him elsewhere, — essays, epigrams, sonnets, stories, sermons, songs, philosophical observations and treatises, histories and legal documents. Even dramas are to be found in the Bible, and also love-songs; nay, so far does dumb show enter into the ministry of Ezekiel that some of his compositions might fairly be described as *tableaux-vivants*. The distinction between things sacred and things secular, which exercises so questionable an influence upon our times, seems unknown to the world of the Old Testament. Its literature embraces national anthems of Israel in various stages of its history, war ballads with rough refrains, hymns of defeat and victory, or for triumphant entrance into a conquered capital; pilgrim songs, and the chants with which the family parties beguiled the jour-

neys to the great feasts; fanciful acrostics to clothe sacred meditations or composed in compliment to a perfect wife; even the games of riddles which belong to such social meetings as Samson's wedding. With the single exception of humorous literature, for which the Hebrew temperament has little fitness, the Bible presents as varied an intellectual food as can be found in any national literature.

But the anxious inquiry will be made by some: Will not this literary treatment of Holy Writ interfere with its higher religious and theological uses? The question ought to answer itself: if the Divine Revelation, which might have been made in so many different ways, has in fact taken the form of literature, this must be warrant sufficient for making such literary form a matter of study. But this is an understatement of the case; not only is the literary study of the Bible permissible, but it is a necessary adjunct to the proper spiritual interpretation. No doubt edification of a kind may be drawn from an isolated verse or a brief succession of sentences; but it is only when each literary section has been understood as a whole in its plain or natural meaning that it is safe to go forward to the deeper spiritual signification. The neglect of

this principle is responsible for many of the fanciful and even grotesque interpretations of the old commentators. To take an example, Solomon's Song contains the following passage: —

> By night, on my bed,
> I sought him whom my soul loveth;
> I sought him, but I found him not.

A commentator like Quarles was ready from this single verse to plunge into mystic interpretation. His book of emblems represents a female figure, conventionally signifying the human soul, standing with a flat candlestick in her hand by a bedside; she is turning down the bed-clothes, and appears surprised to find nothing inside them; while on the floor, hidden from her but visible to the reader, is the figure of the Saviour, in the attitude of one who has tumbled out of bed. No irreverence, of course, is intended; but such ludicrous literalism would be impossible to any one reading the poem as a piece of literature, who must see that the words quoted are the beginning of an exquisite dream of the heroine losing and again finding her lover. Nor when the dream has been fully caught is there any loss of mystic symbolism. All sections of the poem are a celebration of conjugal love. But the Old and New Testaments alike apply the

imagery of Bride and Bridegroom to the relations between the soul and Christ, or the Church and its Head, and thus all the thoughts and emotions of the poem can have their spiritual applications. First in order of time is that which is natural — the plain literary interpretation — and afterwards that which is spiritual.

The point to be pressed upon the reading world at the present time is that the Bible is, above all things, an *interesting* literature. No class of readers can afford to neglect it, for — with the single exception noted above — every variety of literary interest is represented in the books of the Old and New Testaments. And, in marvellous manner, all these kinds of literary beauty are concentrated in a single work, — the Book of Job. This has an epic story for its basis; if it has less of lyric than of any other form, yet this lyric element — the Curse — is among the most famous passages in all poetry. The bulk of the book is a drama, in which there are characters finely discriminated and meeting in sharp contrast, an open-air scene and chorus of spectators, and a plot which has its dénouement in a thunderstorm — the overlooking of which scenic touch has led to misunderstanding of the speeches attributed to God.

The matter of the poem embraces ethical questions, and even questions of social science, which are still the themes of our philosophers; while so artistically are the various elements blended that each stage of the drama — from prologue to epilogue — has the function of stating or shadowing a different solution of the world's great mystery of pain. Such a blending of all kinds of interest in a single work cannot be paralleled in any other of the world's masterpieces.

Among the separate branches of literature the lyric poetry of the Bible ranges from the early Songs of Deborah, or of Israel by the Red Sea, danced by answering choruses of men and women, to such ideal and deeply spiritual meditations as the Hundred and Thirty-ninth Psalm. Critics by no means partial to the religious side of Scripture have recognized that in lyric poetry the Hebrew leads the literature of the world. Of epic poetry, on the contrary, it has been the custom to say that the Bible has no example. But the truth is rather that the definition of epic poetry needs enlarging to take in the stories of Scripture; the ignoring of these has led to the common mistake that "epic" is equivalent to "fiction." Except in this one matter of being part of the national

history, these Biblical stories produce upon our minds just the effect of epic poems. Such a story is that of Joseph, with its ironic situations and poetic justice; or that of David and Saul, brimful of adventure; or the mixed verse and prose that make up the story of Balaam; or the exquisite idyl that unites in so sweet a bond the melancholy beauty of Naomi and the shy grace of Ruth; or the crown of them all, the Book of Esther, which is saved from being an exciting novel with a double plot only by the accident of its being historically true. These stories are epic gems in a setting of sober history. And this setting will appeal to a different literary taste, presenting history in all its forms, from the archæology of Genesis, or the constitutional history of the following books, to the ecclesiastical digests of Chronicles.

It is impossible here to name all the departments of Biblical literature. A nation's whole philosophy — in that picturesque dress which has given to Hebrew philosophy its name of "Wisdom" — may be read in the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, and the Apocryphal books of Ecclesiasticus and Wisdom of Solomon; read in their proper order, they display the whole devel-

opment of that philosophy, from the brief, disjointed observations that make up Proverbs, to the first troubled attempt to read the meaning of life in Ecclesiastes, and the recovered serenity when, in the Book of Wisdom, a wider survey of life harmonizes analysis and faith. The literature of oratory is splendidly represented in Deuteronomy; and no collection of speeches in secular literature has the interest which is given to the orations of Moses by the dramatic setting of the book, which presents the pathetic situation of Moses at Pisgah, until pathos becomes triumph and rhetoric gives place to song. Philosophy and oratory belong to all literatures; but the Bible has all to itself the department of prophecy. This gathers into one distinct literary form sermons and political speeches; burdens on hostile peoples that suggest the satires of secular literature; the mystic poetry of visions; dramatic dialogues like Micah's controversy before the mountains, or Jeremiah's intercession in a season of drought; while all ordinary literary forms are transcended when Joel and Isaiah present advancing judgment in a spiritual drama that has all space for its stage and all time for the period of its action.

In intrinsic worth, then, the Old Testament is

second to none of the world's great literatures. Moreover, it has, in common with the literature of Greece and Rome, been the main factor in the development of our modern prose and poetry. For the English-speaking people, no liberal education will be complete in which classical and Biblical literatures do not stand side by side.

LITERARY ASPECTS OF GENESIS.

II.

LITERARY ASPECTS OF GENESIS.

By the Rev. JOHN P. PETERS, Ph. D., Sc. D., D. D.
Of St. Michael's Church, New York.

THE use of the Bible as a dictionary of religion has somewhat obscured its literary character. It is most admirably arranged for reference to texts by means of chapters and verses on the principle of a dictionary, but this arrangement, so well adapted to that use, renders it difficult reading, and often hides from view the true connection of its parts. We read it by chapters, stopping in the middle of a narrative, losing much of the literary beauty, failing oftentimes to apprehend the general structure, and the relation of parts to one another as conceived by the author.

To comprehend the book of Genesis as its author designed it we must throw aside these late divisions into chapters and verses, so convenient for purposes of reference, and search for the author's own divisions. When we do this we shall

find that the author of Genesis arranged that book according to a very definite and simple scheme, prefixing to each section what we may call a chapter heading, stating the contents of that particular chapter or section. These chapter headings are unmistakable when once attention has been called to them. The first is found at Chap. ii. 4: "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens." The next chapter, the third, for there is an introductory chapter, i. 1–ii. 3, which has no heading, because a first page or chapter or section is always clear as such to both eye and ear without anything further, has a similar heading, v. 1: "This is the book of the generations of Adam." The fourth chapter, vi. 9–ix. 29, is "The generations of Noah;" the fifth, x. 1–xi. 9, "The generations of the sons of Noah;" the sixth, xi. 10–xi. 26, "The generations of Shem;" the seventh, xi. 27–32, "The generations of Terah."

Here the author starts afresh. He has carried the story down from the creation to Abraham, the great father of the Hebrews. His manner now changes. He has more to narrate. There is less genealogy proportionally, and more detail, more

stories. Arranging the work in modern fashion, we might call the first eleven chapters the first book of Genesis. With the twelfth chapter begins the second book. Here, as in the first book, the first chapter or section has no heading, and for the same reason, that it requires none. It is only the succeeding chapters which require headings, because without them the reader might not observe that a new chapter had begun. The Hebrews did not use, it must be remembered, our modern devices of numbering, spacing, and the like, any more than they used brackets, quotation marks, italics, capitals, punctuation, and all the other devices which have been devised in modern times for purposes of convenience and precision.

The first chapter of the second book of Genesis, the eighth of the entire book, xii. 1–xxv. 11, is the story of Abraham. At the beginning of the ninth chapter, xxv. 12–18, there is a chapter heading of the same character as those in the first book: "These are the generations of Ishmael." The tenth chapter, xxv. 19–xxxv. 29, is "The generations of Isaac;" the eleventh chapter, xxxvi. 1–xxxvii. 1, is "The generations of Esau;" the twelfth chapter, xxxvii. 2 to the close of the book, is "The generations of Jacob."

We have, then, according to the scheme of the author, two books, the first with seven chapters, a mystical number, starting with the creation in seven days, and bringing us down to the entrance into Canaan of Abraham, the great father of the Hebrews; while the two books together, composed of twelve chapters, also a mystical number, bring us down to the twelve patriarchs, ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel, and the beginning of the sojourn of the Hebrews in Egypt. The scheme is mystical, and yet so plain that were the book now arranged in its chapters as the author planned them, with their headings, the most careless reader must at once observe the purpose and character of the work.

Genesis is the first volume in a series treating of the early history of Israel. According to the conception of the author, Israel began with the creation of the universe, because God had Israel in mind when He began to create, and a history of the beginnings of Israel must commence with the history of the beginnings of the universe. Our volume opens, therefore, with the creation of the universe: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The second chapter overlaps the first somewhat. It is concerned with the

preparation of the earth for the dwelling-place of man, and the formation of a garden of delight in the region of the Tigris and Euphrates. There man, Adam, is placed, and everything in the garden is given to him to use, excepting one tree, the fruit of which he may not eat. Then out of his very flesh and bones is formed for him a helpmeet, woman. But with sex sin comes into the world; they eat of the forbidden fruit; man and woman are driven out of Eden, the garden, and there begins for the human race the hard life of toil and child-bearing, and strife and envy and murder. Of the children of this first pair one is a herdsman, another tills the ground. God accepts the offering of the herdsman and not that of the husbandman, and in envy, Cain, the husbandman, slays Abel, the herdsman. Little by little men learn to build cities, to work in copper and iron, to make musical instruments, and the like. The third chapter gives us genealogical lists of the descendants of Adam, as far as Noah. Then it tells us of the loves of gods and men, the resulting race of giants, and the wickedness of the earth. Only Noah was good. The next chapter, the fourth, tells of the purification of the earth by a great flood, from which only Noah and his family were saved, he having at the

command of God built a great box, or ark, in which he floated safely over the waters. Toward the close of the chapter we hear of the cultivation of the vine and the discovery of wine by Noah. The next chapter records the repeopling of the earth by the three sons of Noah. All nations known to the author are classified as descended from one of these three sons, and their differences in language are accounted for by the story of the tower of Babel. The sixth and seventh chapters are brief and dry, consisting of genealogies tracing the descent of Terah from Shem and of Abraham from Terah, showing the close racial affinities of Hebrews and Aramæans. So the author briefly sums up the history of the universe and of mankind before Abraham, and prepares the way for the story of the ancestors of the Hebrews.

The second part of the book deals at far greater length with the story of the immediate ancestors of Israel. The locality is the land of Canaan. Hither Abram, or Abraham, has come by the command of God, and here he and Lot, his nephew, wander back and forth with their flocks and herds. Abraham has a very beautiful wife, Sarai, or Sarah, so beautiful that when, driven by famine, they once wander to Egypt, the Pharaoh becomes enamored

of her. But although God has promised that Abraham shall become a great nation, Sarah remains barren. Lot and Abraham separate, and Lot becomes the father of Ammon and Moab, to the east of the Jordan. Abraham himself by an Egyptian handmaid, Hagar, as also by another wife, Keturah, becomes the father of various nomadic Arabic and Aramæan tribes inhabiting the country south and east of Canaan; but from none of these is Israel descended. Finally, when it seems impossible that God's promise shall be fulfilled, when Sarah is old and withered, by the announcement of an angel, a son, Isaac, is born to them; and just as you think that Abraham's trials are ended and his faith rewarded, God calls upon him to sacrifice this long hoped for and only son. The boy is bound upon the altar, and the father's hand is raised to slay him, when God interferes to save him, and gives Abraham a ram to sacrifice in his stead. This father of the future Israel may not marry a wife from the nations of Canaan, for the blood of Israel must be kept pure; so when Abraham is "old, and well stricken in years" he sends Eliezer his servant to Mesopotamia to choose for Isaac a wife from his, Abraham's, people. The wooing of Rebekah for Isaac

by Eliezer (Gen. xxiv.) is from the literary point of view the most beautiful thing in the whole book of Genesis, a prose idyl.

The next chapter, "The generations of Isaac," has comparatively little to tell of Isaac. It tells us rather the history of his children before his death. Isaac and Rebekah have two children, twins, of whom Esau, or Edom, is born first, and Jacob, or Israel, second. Esau is a rough, careless, generous man of the field, Jacob is crafty and shrewd, an acquirer and a man of civilization. He is a typical Jew in the sense in which Homer's Ulysses is a typical Greek. Jacob supplants Esau, first buying his birthright for a mess of pottage when Esau is faint with hunger, and later by the help and at the instigation of his mother Rebekah, whose favorite he is, defrauding Esau of the blessing of their blind old father, which was the equivalent of a deed of primogeniture. For this he is obliged to flee for his life from the outraged and wrathful Esau, and betakes himself to Mesopotamia, to the home of his Aramæan uncle, his mother's brother. Here there is a constant struggle of wit between him and Laban his uncle. When he had worked seven years for his cousin Rachel, whom he loved, Laban gives him her elder sister, the blear-eyed Leah.

But in this struggle of wit Jacob finally wins. He gains Rachel as well as Leah, and by a cunning trick wins the better part of the increase of Laban's flock. Once more he must take to flight, pursued this time by Laban. On Mt. Gilead Laban overtakes him, and the two strike a covenant by which Jacob retains what he has gained, and Mt. Gilead becomes the border between Israelites and Aramæans. Then Jacob crosses the Jabbok, makes peace with Esau, and settles down in Canaan, in the neighborhood of Shechem.

The next chapter is the chapter of the genealogies of Jacob's twin brother, Esau, with lists of the dukes and kings of Edom, which is Esau. The fact that Edom was older as a nation than Israel, told mystically in the story of Jacob and Esau, is here stated in plain words, and we have a list of the kings of Edom before there was a king in Israel.

The final chapter contains the story of Jacob after the death of Isaac, but deals principally with his children, the name-fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. The former chapter recorded the birth of these children. Two of them, Joseph and Benjamin, the last and youngest, were children of Rachel, the favorite wife. The interest of this

chapter centres about the fortunes of Joseph, the son of the favorite wife. He wins the hatred of his brethren, and is sold by them to wandering Arabs, who in their turn sell him into slavery in Egypt. There, after resisting at the risk of his life the seductions of his master's wife, he finally becomes a great prince, and the administrator of the realm. Then after some dramatic scenes he rewards his brothers good for evil, and brings his father and all his family to Egypt, where he settles them in wealth and prosperity. The story is narrated with great power, and is a beautiful piece of work from the artistic standpoint. Following this there is a brief narrative explaining in the form of a story why the tribe of Ephraim was greater than its elder brother Manasseh; then a poem, called the "Blessing of Jacob," characterizing the twelve tribes of Israel as they appear in history; and finally the death of Jacob and of his son Joseph, which latter is the true hero of this chapter as Jacob was of the preceding.

In reading any book one naturally asks, Who is its author? At the head of the book in our English Bible we read: "The First Book of Moses, commonly called Genesis." This title does not appear in the original Hebrew. There the book is

anonymous, without indication of authorship and also without name. The Hebrews designated it by its first words "In the Beginning." The name which is prefixed to the book in our translation, as well as the designation of authorship, is taken from the Greek translation of the work made in Alexandria in Egypt in the second century B. C. or thereabouts. In the name "Genesis" or "Beginnings" the Greek translators were most happy. It exactly expresses the contents of the book. In entitling it "The First Book of Moses" they were not so happy. Almost all modern scholars reject this title as incorrect, and regard the book as written some centuries after the time of Moses. In view of this pretty general agreement of the scholars we should probably do well to drop the title "First Book of Moses" and content ourselves, however regretfully, with the anonymity of the original Hebrew.

The next question which we ask ourselves is, Whence did the unknown author derive his material? Is the work an original composition, or did the author make use of material already in existence? If the latter, how has he handled that material? No one can read the book of Genesis critically without observing striking differences of

style in different parts of the book. Take, for instance, the prologue, the chapter on creation, and compare it with the story of Adam in Eden in the second chapter. The language of the prologue is unornate, its method is stiff and precise, and it is repetitious, after the manner of legal documents. The story of Adam in Eden, on the other hand, is in the language and style of literature as distinguished from that of law or theology or science. It lacks the precision, but is easy, flowing, and picturesque. But not only is there a difference in style, there is a similar difference in the point of view. The theological conception of the first chapter is highly exalted and spiritual. God is a spirit, working in a spiritual manner. He is infinite, and by His word all things are made. The cosmogony of this chapter has never been equalled, much less surpassed. It is a marvellous creation, and it is the work of a theologian. The conception of God in the second chapter is anthropomorphic, and the view of His relation to man and the world the popular view. God brings the animals which He has made to the man to see what he will call them, and as he calls them so they are named. Then, as there is no fit mate for the man among the animals, God puts him to sleep,

and, removing one of his ribs, fashions out of it a woman. This has the quality of poetry, and there is something very beautiful in its quaintness and naïveté; but it must be characterized as folk lore in distinction from the scientific and theological treatment of the first chapter. Further than this, we observe when we read the two chapters together a certain amount of duplication. The second chapter is to some extent a duplicate of the first. It tells us once more, but in a different manner, of the creation of the world, of vegetation, of animal life, but above all of man. In the first chapter we are told that God created mankind in His own image, both male and female. In the second chapter the Lord God makes a man, and then later out of his ribs fashions a woman.

What we observe in these two chapters runs through the whole book. There are two distinct narratives, one legal and theological in tone, careful and precise, full of genealogies, exalted in its spiritual conceptions, but generally stiff and unattractive from the literary standpoint; the other, attractive and often extremely beautiful in its style, but naïve and primitive in its conceptions, expressing the imaginings of the folk as over against the thought of the scholar. Out of these two nar-

ratives in the main our author composed his work, joining them together in a manner suited to his time, but alien to our present literary methods, not concerned too carefully to conceal the joints, or harmonize minor disagreements and inconsistencies; and it must be confessed that his work has been well done. The ordinary reader even of to-day does not observe the discrepancies and duplications, unless the critic calls them to his attention, and the composite work has a character and charm of its own through its very differences of style and conception superior to that of either narrative by itself. Out of the one the author has fashioned the framework, the bones of his new creation, and out of the other the flesh and blood. So he has made a finished and well-rounded whole, a true artistic creation, entitling him to the name of author and not merely compiler. To quote a homely proverb,

> "'T is neither butter nor bread,
> But the way it is spread."

Critics have pointed out that the second of the two narratives described above, the folk narrative, is itself composite, composed of two stories joined together into one at a still earlier date. They are, however, so similar in tone and so closely joined

together that it is no easy task to separate them. There are further a few documents or episodes which may have come to our author in one or the other of the two main documents, but which are manifestly separate compositions older than the narratives in which they are imbedded. Such are the poems scattered here and there through the book, the "Sword Song of Lamech" (iv. 23, 24), the "Blessings of Isaac" (xxvii. 27–29, 39, 40), and above all the "Blessing of Jacob" (xlix. 2–27), none of which, unfortunately, are printed as poetry in the authorized version of the English Bible. Such also is that interesting episode (xiv.) where Abraham is depicted as a valiant warrior victorious over the great kings of Babylonia and Elam, and such are some of the genealogies and lists incorporated entire by later narrators.

These are our author's sources. What is their value, and what their origin? Some of the genealogies in the first part of the book, giving us an account of the origins of civilization, are strikingly similar both in names and treatment to certain Phœnician fragments which have come down to us, while recent discoveries have revealed the fact that some of the stories there contained, and especially that of the flood, were known to the Babylonians.

The material of the first part of Genesis was presumably the common property either of all the peoples of Semitic stock, or at least of the northern division of the Semites, to which Hebrews, Phœnicians, and Babylonians belonged. Each nation treated this material in a different manner. The peculiar feature of the Hebrew treatment of the common stock of legends and traditions is its vastly higher tone of spirituality, that property which theologians term inspiration, by which the common material has been virtually transformed and filled with a new and exalted significance.

Comparing Hebrew literature with Greek, we might call the first part or book of Genesis the "Hesiod of the Jews." But if this be compared with "Hesiod," then the second part must surely be called the "Homer of the Jews." In it we find the traditions of the Hebrew race, the legends of local holy places, the interpretation of tribal names, the explanation of sacred rites and ancestral customs, woven into a story of the great heroes of the dim and shadowy past. History and romance, fact and fancy, religion and worldly wisdom, are combined in one national story.

The heroes of Genesis are eternal. Even aside from the deep religious significance of the book,

which cannot be overlooked by the serious student, the work is one which will always be read and studied by young and old, scholars and simple folk alike. The child finds Genesis the most charming book in the Bible; the grown man hears it with a different but equally great fascination. And to appreciate it fully it should be heard, not read, or at least this is true of those parts which belong to the folk narrative. These are the work of skilful *raconteurs*, and some of them, like the "Destruction of Sodom," the "Wooing of Rebekah," the "Wiles of Jacob," and the story of Joseph or the "Younger Brother" are among the most finished pieces of the *raconteur's* art which have been handed down in any language.

THE LAW OF MOSES.

III.

THE LAW OF MOSES.

By PROF. A. B. BRUCE, D.D.

Of the Free Church College, Glasgow, Scotland.

THERE is no part of the Old Testament of which it is so difficult for ordinary readers to get a clear idea as that which relates to Hebrew legislation. There is such a mixing up of narrative with law, and such a lack of classification in the legal sections, that the reader of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy rises from perusal with a feeling of bewilderment. The difficulty of obtaining any distinct conception of the subject is greatly increased by the fact, brought to light by modern inquiry, that the laws contained in the Pentateuch do not form a homogeneous body proceeding at one time from one and the same legislative mind, that of Moses, but really consist of successive strata of legal enactments, representing widely separated periods of time having much in common but also not a little in which they do not agree, so that they cannot be united into one har-

monious whole. All these strata bear, in Jewish tradition, the name of Moses; but, in this use of the name, "Moses" simply stands as a general heading for Hebrew law, as "David" stands for Hebrew poetry and "Solomon" for Hebrew wisdom.

The whole Old Testament books, and especially the Books of Moses, stand very much in need of arranging and editing to make them intelligible and enjoyable reading for ordinary Christian people. This has been much felt of late, and efforts have been made to meet the want. Among these an honorable place is due to a work recently published by two American scholars. I refer to "Scriptures Hebrew and Christian," arranged and edited as an introduction to the study of the Bible by Drs. Edward T. Bartlett and John P. Peters, of Philadelphia. The outside title of the work (consisting of three volumes) is "The Scriptures for Young Readers." Sunday-school teachers would find it a most valuable aid towards opening up the Bible to their pupils. In this work, in Vol. II., "Hebrew Legislation" is given all together, forming a chapter of some seventy pages. The matter is not arranged in strict accordance with recent critical views, but the editors have had these views before their minds and have benefited by them.

The laws of Israel are classified under four heads: I. The Ten Words; II. The Book of the Covenant; III. Levitical Codes; IV. The Deuteronomic Code. Modern critics would invert the order of III. and IV.

These are the great divisions of the subject. The Ten Words (the Decalogue) form the strong foundation of the whole legislative edifice. They go back, according to the weightiest authorities, to Moses himself — his supremely important personal contribution to the statute-book of Israel. The "Book of the Covenant" means the body of laws found in Exodus xx. 23–xxii. 33. Of this brief code, or fragment of a code, Professor Ryle, in his valuable work on the Canon of the Old Testament, says: "It is suited to the needs of a society in a very early stage of civilization. If, as may well be allowed, the main substance of its laws has descended from the Mosaic legislation, there is no reason to doubt that it has also, at different times, been adapted, by subsequent revision, to the requirements of the people when they were in the enjoyment of a settled agricultural life." "The collection," he adds, "is not to be regarded in the light of an exhaustive official code of statutes, but rather as an agglomeration of laws, perhaps tran-

scribed from memory or extracted fragmentarily for some private purpose from an official source" (p. 25).

The "Deuteronomic" code means the body of laws on various subjects to be found in the Book of Deuteronomy from chapter xii. onwards, chapters i. to xi. being a sort of sermon on the importance of keeping the law. The name "Deuteronomy" means "the law over again," the implied notion being that Moses, before he died, repeated in the hearing of the people the laws he had given them before, as if to impress them with the duty of keeping them in remembrance and putting them in practice: as if he said, "Now do not forget them, my children." But the laws in the fifth book of the Pentateuch are not a mere repetition of those in Exodus and Leviticus. They differ in important particulars. And there is reason to believe that the "Deuteronomic" laws were not later but earlier than the "Levitical code" contained in the middle books of the Pentateuch. The Levitical code was the latest, uppermost stratum of the successive layers of Hebrew legislation. It took its final form in the hands of Ezra and his associates, and represents the period of the Babylonish exile and the post-captivity era. The Decalogue

goes back to Moses. The Book of the Covenant may have been in existence 1000 B.C. The Deuteronomic code belongs to the time of King Josiah, who reigned in the seventh century B.C. Ezra brings us a century and a half nearer the Christian era. All three of the codes (II., III., IV.) have, of course, much in common in respect both to religion and to civil life. The Hebrews were very conservative. They clung tenaciously to what was old, and even when they innovated they wished the new to pass for old. A great deal of what is in all the codes goes back probably to very ancient times. Each code repeats the tradition with variations or additions adapted to new circumstances. Common to all the codes, including the Decalogue, is the combination of religion and morality, duty to God and duty to man.

While all the codes have much in common, they have their distinctive characteristics. The grand distinction of the Decalogue is that it deals only with that which is fundamental in religion and morals. "Love God with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself" — is its sum. There is no *ritual*, but only the ethical, the universally important and perennially valid. Even the Fourth Commandment is ethical at the core, a humane statute

securing a resting-time for labor-drudges, slaves, and even for the beast of burden.

The Book of the Covenant on its religious side reaffirms the great doctrine of the Decalogue that there is but one God. Comparing it with the codes which come after, it is to be noted that it does not insist on *one central sanctuary*. Exodus xx. 24, as it is rendered in "The Scriptures for Young Readers," runs thus: "Altars of earth shalt thou make to me, and sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings and thy peace offerings, thy sheep and thine oxen. In every place where I cause my name to be worshipped I will come to thee and bless thee." On the human side this very ancient body of laws has, of course, much to say on the subject of justice between man and man. Crude and quaint in form, the statutes bearing on this topic commend themselves as essentially just and reasonable. "Eye for eye," "tooth for tooth," is a barbarous law literally carried out; nevertheless these phrases embody, in homely form, the fundamental principle of civil jurisprudence, that for all wrong there must be adequate compensation. The rights of bondsmen and bondswomen are not, as we might have supposed, overlooked in this primitive code. Indeed, that is the very first topic dealt

with in the code, after the duty owing to Jehovah has been briefly enforced (Exodus xxi. 2–11). The fact may indicate that there was much need for this humane protective legislation to defend the weak against the strong, which the Bible never fails to do. Just one other feature may be noticed in this early body of laws, what may be called the element of kindliness, or Christianity anticipated: "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass astray, thou shalt bring it back to him. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee fallen under his burden, thou shalt forbear to leave him" (Exodus xxiii. 4, 5). How much is involved in this simple injunction! It is in one concrete instance an anticipation of the great law of Jesus, "Love your enemies."

Passing on to the Deuteronomic code, formulated centuries later, one obvious point of contrast is much greater elaboration. The little Book of the Covenant has grown to be a large, bulky book of laws, with a lengthy sermon prefixed to it. Yet, after all, it is, in the main, merely an expansion of the earlier code. On the religious side, however, there is one very marked difference. The Decalogue and the Book of the Covenant had both said, with emphasis, *one God.* But Deuteronomy says

not only one God, but, with quite remarkable emphasis, *one sanctuary*. The law enforcing this stands at the head of the code (chapter xii. 1–7). By the time this new code was compiled, it had been found that the early freedom in worship had led to great abuses, to disastrous imitation of the vile rites of the Canaanites. Therefore the law of a central sanctuary was regarded by the best men in Israel as a reform, and won the earnest support of the prophets of the seventh century before Christ. In reference to what I have called the Christian element, what we have to note is not contrast but development. The law of kindness has grown to larger dimensions, and now embraces a variety of particulars, such as that the hungry man shall be at liberty to help himself from a neighbor's standing grain or vineyard, and that gleanings must be left for the poor in the orchard and harvest-field. Even the wants of the beast of burden are mercifully provided for. "Thou shall not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn" (Deuteronomy xxv. 4). "Doth God take care for oxen?" asked Saint Paul. The God of the ancient Hebrews certainly did, and that doubtless was one reason why our Lord had a preference for the Book of Deuteronomy, as shown by the quotations from it

in the story of the Temptation. The second half of Isaiah and Deuteronomy were two favorite books of the Old Testament with Jesus. If we knew them as well as he did, we should not be surprised at this. The spirit of prophecy, in its noblest form, breathes through both.

I have left myself very little space to speak of the Levitical code, the latest of the four. The outstanding feature of it is the great prominence it gives to *ritual*. Priests, holy furniture, holy times, sacrifices, rules for securing ceremonial cleanness, — these and the like are the great topics of Leviticus. We are in a different world from that of the prophet Moses with his Ten Words concerning the great fundamentals of religion and morality. It is not that the men of Ezra's time did not care for the fundamentals. It is that the times, as they judge, call for laying stress on ritual. "One *God*," said Moses; "One *sanctuary*," said the reformers of Josiah's time; "One carefully regulated system of worship at the one sanctuary," said Ezra and his coadjutors. Probably the last mentioned movement was necessary, yet the prominence given to ritual was the beginning of a great evil, — the growth of legalism and rabbinism.

In the Levitical code, as distinguished from the

Deuteronomic; the class of religious officials has undergone development and gained in status. In Deuteronomy priests and Levites are one; the standing phrase is, "the priests, the Levites." In Leviticus and the late historical books (Chronicles) they are distinct: priests *and* Levites. In Deuteronomy they are a poor class, and as such recommended to the consideration of the charitable. In the Levitical code there is an elaborate system of tithes, which, if worked out, would make the once poor class a rich and influential corporation.

THE AGE OF THE JUDGES.

IV.

THE AGE OF THE JUDGES.

By PROF. L. W. BATTEN, Ph. D.
Of the Episcopal Divinity School, Philadelphia.

THE treatment of this subject is limited in two ways, — by the space at command and by the character of the series to which this article belongs. In other words, it is a brief literary treatment of an interesting and important epoch in the history of Israel.

The sources of information are the books of Judges and Ruth, with various incidental allusions in other parts of the Bible, in the New Testament as well as in the Old. These scattered notices, however, coming mostly from ages long subsequent, are based on the one book which is our main reliance, and have, therefore, but a secondary value. There is much difference of opinion about the date of the writing of the Book of Ruth; and, though it is probably a product of the settled times of the monarchy, we may fairly accept the statement with which the book opens — "And it was in the times

when the judges judged" — as giving the period to which the events narrated belong, even though, as Driver says, "distance seems to have mellowed the rude, unsettled age of the Judges."

Our chief source of information is, therefore, the Book of Judges. If we are lacking in variety of sources, we gain in other ways. As Dean Stanley says, "Hardly any portion of the Hebrew Scriptures, whether by its actual date or by the vividness of its representations, brings us nearer to the times described."

As the most casual reader must have observed, this book falls into three parts of quite different character. There is an introductory part, i. 1–ii. 5; the main body of the book, the stories of the heroes, ii. 6–xvi. 31; and an appendix containing two stories which throw light on the social and religious life of the times, xvii.–xxi. The first part describes the condition of the country at the opening of this period; not only has it marked affinities with the Book of Joshua, but some passages are almost identical with passages in that book. The second part is made up of a collection of stories of Israelitish heroes from different sources put together for a religious purpose. There is unity of aim with diversity of authorship. The

aim is expressed in the setting in which nearly every narrative is placed, — "And the people of Israel again did that which was evil in the eyes of Jahveh, and Jahveh delivered them into the power of. . . . And the people of Israel cried unto Jahveh, and Jahveh raised up to them a deliverer, . . . and the land had rest." This setting is the work of an editor who combined the various narratives to show the providential hand of God in the darkest and most troubled period of Israel's history.

In one case — the story of Barak and Deborah — the editor had at command and has happily preserved both a prose and a poetical account. The latter, the Song of Deborah, is the earliest portion of the book, probably one of the earliest portions of Biblical literature, and apparently a product of the Northern Kingdom.

The third part narrates two incidents, — the expedition of the Danites against Laish, xvii., xviii., and the war with Benjamin, xix.–xxi. These narratives are placed at the end of the book on account of their subject, not because they belong to the closing part of this period.

The age of the Judges properly includes Eli and Samuel, the latter marking the transition to a new epoch of a different character. Samuel was

the connecting link between the Theocracy and the Monarchy.

"It is by representing the mode of being of a whole nation and a whole age," says Taine, "that a writer rallies round him the sympathies of an entire age and an entire nation." We read literature not so much for itself as for the life of which it is an expression. Indeed, the test of literature is its power to portray life, real or ideal. We must look into the Book of Judges to read the life of which it is a picture. "For merely human interest," says Stanley, "for the lively touches of ancient manners, for the succession of romantic incidents, for the consciousness that we are living face to face with the persons described, there is nothing like the history of the Judges from Othniel to Eli."

The period is often called "the age of anarchy."[1] The Book of Judges gives color to that designation, expressing forcibly the unsettled condition: "In those days there was no king in Israel; each one was wont to do that which was right in his own eyes" (xvii. 6). Moses had held the tribes together under his rule, trying to secure a national unity without sacrificing tribal rights. Joshua held them together by his great power as a military

[1] *E.g.* Scriptures Hebrew and Christian, Pt. I. c. 18.

leader, and by the hard necessities of a war for existence. Before Joshua's death the tribes took up their abodes in the sections assigned to them. The conquest, however, was not complete. Each tribe had battles of its own to fight against the remnant of the Canaanites. Joshua had not attempted to appoint a successor, as Moses had done. The times were such as to make such action impossible, as each tribe was concerned with its own affairs, and could not easily be induced to lend a helping hand to the others.

Judah and Simeon, however, united their forces and succeeded in driving all the Canaanites from their borders, except those in the valley who possessed the formidable chariots of iron. Joseph (Ephraim) succeeded in capturing Bethel, and secured a sure footing in their portion. Benjamin, Manasseh, Zebulon, Asher, and Naphtali were only partially successful in the conquest of their portions, having hostile tribes within their borders who were only gradually reduced to subjection. The tribe of Dan was least successful. They were forced into the mountains by the fierce Amorites, and made so little headway against them that a part of the tribe went far to the north and captured the peaceful Phœnician city of Laish, and

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thus Dan — the new name of the city — became the northernmost point of Israel.

This stage of the conquest continued a considerable time after the death of Joshua. It is introductory to the age of Judges, the time when there was neither king nor judge in Israel.

But there was as yet no peace for Israel. Enemies within their borders were supplemented by enemies without. The wars of the time were for the most part mere plundering expeditions. The foes of Israel tried to reduce them to the condition of tributaries, so as to make the land a source of revenue. The enemies came from all directions — Cushan-rishathaim from the distant east, Sisera from the north, the Philistines from the west, Midian, Moab, and Ammon from across the Jordan. It was the invasions of these various nations that brought out the heroic characters of the time, the men whose valiant deeds were praised in early song and story, and whose character as God-fearing and God-directed men was ever held in sacred remembrance.[1] The deeds of these men made a deep impression on the popular mind, because the nation, or some part of it, was delivered by them after years of defeat and humiliation. It is one thing to

[1] See 1 Sam. xii. 11; Heb. xi. 32.

resist the first encroachments of a hostile power; it is quite another thing to break the hold of an enemy which has for years held oppressive sway over a people whose spirit is crushed and whose hope is dead.

The Judges are thirteen in number. Of these, Abimelech stands by himself as one who brought upon his country war and distress rather than victory and peace. Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon are little more than names to us. Othniel and Ehud are of only secondary importance, while the great Judges were Barak (with whom the name of Deborah is indissolubly associated), Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson — these are the men whose heroism people never forgot.

The English word "judge" but inadequately renders the Hebrew *shophet*. In Phœnician, as we know from inscriptions and from Livy, the same word, *suffet*, was applied to a civil ruler, who exercised, as a matter of course, judicial functions.

It is expressly stated of each of the chief Judges, except Jephthah, that he was raised up of God to rescue Israel when punishment had effected its disciplinary purpose. Barak undertook the war at the prophetic command of Deborah, who is as much the hero of the victory over Sisera as Barak or

"Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite." Even in the case of the rude border-chief Jephthah, it is clearly implied that his mission was the result of God's grief at Israel's suffering (x. 16 ff.).

Like all other great men, the Judges were the product of the times. Great men are not really wanting in any age, only the exigency to call them out. Israel suffered until some soul moved by the Spirit of God could bear it no longer. Such a one takes his life in his own hands, organizes as many bold hearts as he can stir up in sympathy with himself, and goes against the enemy. The success of the expedition brought the leader into such prominence that he became the natural ruler of the people for life. In one case the crown was offered to the returning victor, Gideon, and in another case — Jephthah's — the permanent headship of the tribe was the price of leaving the freebooter's careless life for the war against Ammon.

One Judge stands quite apart from the rest in several ways. Samson — whose name is derived from the Hebrew word for sun, *i. e. shemesh* — was appointed to his mission before he was born. Like Isaac, Samuel, and John the Baptist, he was born of a mother whose expectation of children had long

since passed away. Unlike the other Judges, his work was purely individual; he never associated others with him, but fought his battles single-handed. So far as the records go, he never lifted his finger in his divine mission against the Philistines except in personal revenge. Milton has made much of his last days in his great poem, "Samson Agonistes," but, unhappily, his picture of Samson's nobleness is not in agreement with the hero's last prayer: "Strengthen me, O God! this once, that I may have revenge on the Philistines at one stroke for my two eyes" (xvi. 28).

The collector of these stories believed that he saw in the deeds of the heroes, even of Jephthah and Samson, the hand of God working for the welfare of his people. He was not mistaken; for the more we study the times, the more plainly we can see that into the darkness the light was beginning to penetrate, that out of the disorder order was beginning to emerge, — in other words, that a few people at least were made to see that Israel must have a unity both political and religious. It was impossible for Israel to prosper worshipping a host of gods or insisting too much on the independence of the tribes. The Song of Deborah shames the tribes who refused to join in the war in which

the prophetess, with divinely given insight, could see that all had a common interest; and, on the other hand, it gives just praise to those who rallied about the standard of Barak. But the success of that battle was not due wholly to the valor of leaders or men, but to the help that came from above:

> "They fought from heaven,
> The stars in their courses fought against Sisera" (v. 20).

"The people learned by perpetual struggle," says Ewald, "to defend right valiantly their new earthly home and the free exercise of their religion, and were thereby preparing for coming generations a sacred place, where that religion and national culture might unfold itself freely and fully."

Dean Stanley compares this period to the Middle Ages, and the comparison is certainly striking; but for Americans it is more suggestive to compare the age of the Judges with the troubled period of our history immediately following the Revolutionary War, when we were "one nation to-day, and thirteen to-morrow." Under the great Washington and the pressure of war the Colonies were held together pretty firmly; but as soon as the pressure

was relieved the period of disorder began. From the very confusion, however, the great lesson of national unity was learned in part, though it took another bloody war to make the "Union forever" an unquestioned fact. The united kingdom of all Israel, and the worship of Jehovah alone as the God of Israel, were the two great products of this age, not springing to the birth full-grown indeed, but so far established that no permanent backward movement was possible.

RUTH AND ESTHER.

V.

RUTH AND ESTHER.

By the REV. JAMES M. WHITON, Ph. D.
Brooklyn, New York.

COULD the two books we here put together stand together in our Bible, it were in happy contrast, so like and yet so unlike. Here the Peasant and the Queen exhibit, in the idyl of the one and the drama of the other, in times eight centuries apart, the same nobility of soul amid the sorest trials, whether in the country or in the court. And yet it is not a less felicitous arrangement which in our Bible, following the order of the Septuagint and of the Vulgate, between the scenes of blood and misery depicted in the books of the Judges and of Samuel, introduces, like the desert oasis with its palms and well, the sweet prose-poem of Ruth. Here is rest for the soul in its artless tale of days that seem

> "Bound each to each by natural piety,"

and of a love that "many waters cannot quench." The sketch of the patriarchal simplicity in which

the wealthy landowner superintends his farm-hands, and shares their noonday meal, seems designed to strike the chords in which Horace, weary of the splendor of imperial Rome, loved to sing of the unspoiled country. That its heroine is a woman of the fiercely proscribed race, which might not even to the tenth generation enter into the congregation of Israel, seems almost in intentional contrast with the rigor with which Ezra put all mixed marriages under ban. At least, it reminds us of the protest which Jesus made against Jewish intolerance by choosing as his pattern of neighborly love a Samaritan. The Talmud has admiringly reckoned it as chief among the Hagiographa, — the third principal division of the Old Testament. It was the portion of Scripture appointed to be read at Pentecost, in whose liberal festivities the Law enjoined bountiful remembrance of the poor, the stranger, and the widow. For such was Ruth.

The theme is common, yet one that we weary of no more than of the grass and the flowers, — filial piety, devoted, courageous, self-respecting, winning recognition and reward by patient, modest merit. It comes to us from what we deem more dark and cruel times than ours, bearing witness to the unspoiled goodness that from old has ever

dwelt on earth. Unsurpassed in naïve simplicity, it is in some respects unique. It beautifies with the tenderest sympathy a relationship that is often too fruitful of antipathy. In the crisis of events it borrows a peculiarly romantic flavor from the singularity of a marriage claim legitimate then, but unimaginable now.

In the four chapters of the book four scenes unfold, in which a blighted life is made, through the struggle of devoted love, to bloom again.

Famine has made Naomi an exile, and death has made her a childless widow in a foreign land. In her old home her lot will be less intolerable, and thither she will return. But her daughter-in-law, Ruth, insists on going with her, though there the intolerable lot which Naomi shuns will be her lot, — a childless widow among foreigners. Her impassioned protestation against Naomi's affectionate remonstrance has become the classic confession of the most indissoluble union known to love, — "The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." Here between the lines we see on what a home had fallen the midnight of trouble, which forms the first scene of the story.

So Naomi returns, and Ruth with her, to Beth-

lehem, where well-to-do kinsmen still dwelt. That they were also well disposed the story shows. But Naomi's future was now involved with Ruth's, and Ruth had to win reputation in Bethlehem. In undertaking the duty of breadwinning for them both she soon does this. In going forth as a gleaner among the village poor, "her hap was" to light on the rich kinsman's field. He knew her story, but not her face. On learning her name, he gives her, not only protection from the insult to which her work might expose her, but a share in the reapers' luncheon, and, above all, the kindly encouragement for which the struggling poor hunger equally with their bread. Thus the second scene of the story brings, after the midnight of trouble, the morning star of hope.

In the third scene we come to the dawn of the day. Assured now of the esteem of the rich kinsman for Ruth as well as for herself, Naomi has recourse to the custom then prevailing, which recognized a childless widow's right to re-marriage with the next of kin, the first son of such a marriage being reckoned as the heir of her deceased husband, that his name might be perpetuated. Bold as may seem the proceeding of Ruth, in obedience to her mother-in-law's directions to

claim this right of Boaz, it was strictly legitimate. Moreover, assured trustfulness in assured goodness can presume on much. That some risk was run by each in that solitary night-colloquy appears in his word of caution: "Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor." But to the pure all things are pure. More of real modesty is in a chaste frankness than in prudery. Doubtless Ruth's trustful boldness lent a charm to her virtue. The village magnate feels the charm, and warms toward his worthy claimant with a tenderness more fatherly than lover-like. "My daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest, for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman."

The concluding scene is occupied with the legal transactions in which Boaz fulfils this promise, and with the wedding amid public congratulations. A son is then born to Ruth, who thus became the great-grandmother of King David. So long before the writer's time had these things happened, that it was necessary for him to explain the legal process by saying, "Now this was the manner in former time in Israel." The congratulations offered to Naomi, when in her grandson's birth her midnight of trouble has changed into the noonday of pros-

perity, are for Ruth's sake, "for thy daughter-in-law, who loveth thee, who is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him," — a word which in the lips of Hebrew women was the hyperbole of praise. In the love of David for Jonathan, for the rebel ingrate Absalom, in that deep spring of feeling whence flowed his psalms, we recognize the spirit of his ancestress, the loving Ruth.

> "The fountains of Hebraic song
> Are in thy heart, fair Ruth,
> Fountains whose tides are deep and strong
> In deathless love and truth."

Well worthy is her story of a place in the sacred volume, whose promise of a heaven to come is too often permitted to obscure its teaching, that this depends on culture here of the heavenly spirit of self-sacrificing love. In Ruth the Christian poet's lesson lives incarnate, —

> "The trivial round, the common task,
> Would furnish all we need to ask —
> Room to deny ourselves, a road
> To bring us daily nearer God."

With Esther we enter a larger world, but the same spirit is dominant there as in Ruth's narrower

sphere, — the high resolve, the steadfast constancy, that

> "grasps the skirts of happy chance,
> And breasts the blows of circumstance,"

but for a more brilliant prize than idyllic Bethlehem offered:

> "And lives to clutch the golden keys,
> To mould a mighty State's decrees,
> And shape the whisper of the throne."

Here are regal splendor, despotic power, sensual passion, intriguing servility, murderous revenge. And here on this dark and stormy sea is a young woman, gifted with beauty, discretion, courage, who masters these menacing elements and becomes the savior of her people. Her dramatic story is full of the strange turns that fancy delights in, from the distaff to the throne, from the banquet to the gibbet; full also of the singular chances, so-called, in which the most trivial things, as in a hair-balance, determine destiny. These give it the zest of a thrilling novel. Yet truth is often stranger than fiction, as in the story of that illegitimate child of a Livonian peasant-girl, who became Catherine I. of Russia.

Less salient, yet not less distinctive, are the book's other singularities, so intensely Jewish in

national feeling, so utterly un-Jewish in the silence about the God and the land and the law of Israel. It reads like a fragment of Persian history, a secular book in the sacred volume. But secular and sacred history are one to him who sees in all

> "One God, one law, one element,
> And one far-off divine event,
> To which the whole creation moves."

The book of Esther is in form a history, in substance a drama, quite compliant, too, with the Horatian canon, that a drama should consist of five acts, no more, no less: —

> "Neve minor neu sit quinto productior actu."

The most natural division of it is as follows:

Act I. Esther's Elevation to the Throne (chapters i., ii.). Act II. Haman's Plot, and Esther's Trouble (chapters iii., iv.). Act III. Esther's Courage, and Haman's Fall (chapters v., vi., vii.). Act IV. Esther's Undoing of Haman's Plot, and Mordecai's Elevation to Haman's Place (chapter viii.). Act V. Esther's Deliverance of her People, and the Institution of its Commemoration (chapter ix.). Epilogue: The Glory of Ahasuerus, and the Greatness of Mordecai (chapter x.).

Dear to the Jewish heart is this book for the national spirit that glows therein. Fitly is it appointed to be read at Purim, a national rather than a religious festival, commemorating a national deliverance. Such a festival befits such a people, whose symbol is the bush that burned but was not consumed, and whose history is the record of the age-long deliverance of a life ofttimes marvellously preserved.

In the first act a cup of wine too much, and the tipsy whim which resulted from it, lead strangely to the elevation of a Jewish maiden to be Queen of Persia in a brilliant transformation, which is reflected in her change of name from Hadassah (myrtle) to Esther (star). Presently her uncle, Mordecai, chances to discover a plot against the king, and she reports it in his name, but his merit goes unrequited at the time, — another chance, but by and by of happy consequence.

In the second act the fell fury of a hereditary foeman, in a feud nine centuries inveterate, unwittingly strikes at the queen's life by a plot to exterminate her people. But the higher power to which he refers the determination of the day of doom by the chance of the lot fixes it eleven months ahead, and secures time for countervailing

agencies to work. Esther intervenes at peril of her life. She is doubtful of her lord's capricious temper. Her moves are wary. He promises "even to the half of the kingdom." She merely begs him to banquet with her, and bring her enemy Haman. She and he must stand face to face, when she finds the time ripe to thrust into the king's astonished hand the scales into which Haman unawares has cast his life against hers. But something checks her disclosure that day. She puts off the king's curiosity by promising to tell him to-morrow, if he and Haman will dine with her again. Whether the delay that proved so opportune be the contrivance of fiction, or part of the romance of facts, it occasions a surprising prelude to the impending crisis.

Chance after chance thickens the plot. That night the king happened to be sleepless, and one read to him from the history of the realm. It happened, again, that the part read recorded Mordecai's discovery of the palace plot, and also that the king bethought himself to ask if he had been rewarded. It happened, too, that Haman had been advised to rid himself at once of Mordecai, and came to ask for the death-warrant, when, again, it happened that the king spoke first:

"What shall be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor?" Naturally thinking, "That means me," the audacious favorite proposes to set the man on the king's horse, wearing the royal crown and robes, and to conduct him through the city by the hand of a chief nobleman, proclaiming his merit. Where else is there so striking a picture of that

> "Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself,
> And falls on the other"?

"Make haste, and do as thou hast said to Mordecai the Jew." So narrowly does Mordecai escape all, to win all! With such presentiment of fate comes Haman to the banquet again, where Esther, apprised, no doubt, of the new turn of affairs, now confidently awaits her enemy. Short, sharp, terrible, the ensuing crisis in which he falls, like a Satan from heaven to the pit.

In the fourth act Esther achieves her most difficult task, reversing the royal decree for her people's destruction, which was constitutionally irreversible. Such is the practical inconvenience which besets any theory of infallibility in king or pope. Her tears and pleas avail to nullify the decree by an edict authorizing resistance to its execution. Here

she discovers how well a higher power had wrought for her by determining Haman's lot to a day remote enough for her effective intervention. The moral meets us throughout the story, how the wicked must beware of, while the good may hope in, those incalculable elements of God's world which men call chance. In these the "divinity that shapes our ends" appears, however unmentioned his name.

A moral difficulty emerges for us in the fifth act, and its account of Esther's final triumph. It seems a sanguinary demand she makes: "Let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows." But is this mere cruelty, or a precaution against revenge? For thus the Jews' act in killing the men received an intimidating sanction from the royal order for the gibbeting of the corpses. At any rate, we must remember that it is but two centuries, as Macaulay reminds us, since leaders of Parliamentary opposition were liable to pay the forfeit of defeat upon the scaffold, and Cromwell thought it a military necessity to put an Irish garrison to the sword. There is a chord in the book that vibrates to the spirit of revenge, but need not therefore be deemed to have been strung by it.

The open questions of the origin of the Purim feast, and of the historical probabilities of the narrative, do not affect the literary or the moral value of the book. Its right to a place in the canon was early contested. Luther disparaged it as full of "heathen naughtiness." Bleek declares that "no other book of the Old Testament is so far removed from the spirit of the Gospel." Dr. Gladden regards it as "absolutely barren of religious ideas or suggestions." But so Christlike a man as Dean Stanley thus gives his judgment: "The story of Esther, glorified by the genius of Handel and sanctified by the piety of Racine, is not only a material for the noblest and the gentlest of meditations, but a token that in the daily events — the unforeseen chances — of life, in little unremembered acts, in the fall of a sparrow, in the earth bringing forth fruit of herself, God is surely present. The name of God is not there, but the work of God *is*."

THE BOOK OF JOB AS LITERATURE.

VI.

THE BOOK OF JOB AS LITERATURE.

By JOHN F. GENUNG, Ph. D.,
Professor of Rhetoric at Amherst College.

WHEN the great French organist Guilmant was in our country a few years ago, a person coming from one of his recitals was overheard to remark: "Oh, yes, I suppose I ought to call it wonderful; but there was n't any *tune* to it." The remark showed that the man's standard of music was a simple popular melody like "Home, Sweet Home" or "Onward, Christian Soldiers," which he had perhaps expected to hear played with the assured skill of a master, or embellished with unheard-of effects of harmony and instrumentation. At all events, what he had heard had evidently not found him, had not spoken to an inner need of his plebeian taste.

Let us not be too ready to sneer at this man. His implicit demand for a tune was reasonable and natural; it was, in fact, the universal demand.

We all require in music that is to have power over us, that it shall say something to our hearts, shall awaken some melody that already pulsates within us. It must have a tune in order to have meaning. We require the analogue of this in any work of literature that is to be vital in us; the poem or the story must have some definite melody that calls forth a responsive throb from that inner place where our hopes, our ideals, our chastenings are, else all its splendor of word and imagery is so much empty display. In conceding this, however, we have by no means condemned the organist for his failure to reach his vulgar hearer; nor do we thereby reproach the great author because his audience, though fit, is few. The hearer needs to be tuned up, not the musician down. There is a region of truest melody, of loftier utterance, to which he has never ascended. He is like the valet who brings to the view of heroism only his narrow valet-soul; he can contain only according to his capacity; all beyond is meaningless. If he were larger in life, deeper in spirit, wealthier in nature, out of that wilderness of tone that he now hears so unappreciatively would emerge a melody greater than he has ever conceived; he would find himself listening with responsive heart, as many another

hearer has listened, to a strain from the deep music of humanity.

The Book of Job contains some of the profoundest world-music ever chanted; but the melody, the tune of it, has rarely been heard in its real greatness and compass. And the reason is, I think, because men have generally brought to it too small a soul, or because they have contemplated it, not from our universal nature, but from some one narrow side. If we approach it with a dogmatic soul which has an ear only for systems of doctrine or evidences of inspiration; if we approach it with a prosaic soul which sticks fast in questions of dead fact or of the authenticity of documents; if we bring to it merely the homiletic soul which can recognize nothing but texts for sermons, we get something indeed, for the book is rich on many sides, but the great undertone of its central melody is not for us any more than if it were a thing without life giving sound. Such approaches as these are concerned merely with the poem's outworks; they do not find the throb of its heart. Nor can we rightly appreciate it until we bring to it not only all that is in us, but that is in us as enlarged and purified. By this I do not mean that we must be learned in order to read it; the learning we need

is just that experience of trial and spiritual chastening which awaits every earnest-hearted man. Thus the language that the Book of Job speaks is the language of the universal thinking and feeling humanity; or, in other words, the language of the best literature; such language as is pressed out of the world's Dantes and Shakespeares and Miltons. "Literature," says Mr. John Morley, "consists of all the books — and they are not so many — where moral truth and human passion are touched with a certain largeness, sanity, and attraction of form." Apply such a definition as this to the Book of Job, and you will find that the book still retains in enhanced significance all the good that other methods of approach have yielded, while also it gains beyond expression in its meaning for our common human nature. It becomes, as Carlyle has defined it, an "all men's book;" we recognize in it the pulsating soul of the wide world before that soul has shut itself up in prejudice of belief or narrowness of doctrine, and yet after it has been so "salted by fire" as to be deeply aware of the mystery of existence. Thus the straightforward literary study of the book proves to be not only the simplest, but the broadest, freest, most natural and comprehensive. By it the great poem is brought in from

the remote regions where ecclesiasticism and erudition have forced it to moulder, to the wide plains, or rather table-lands, of all men's experience, to dwell with them every day, a vital and upholding influence. By it we interpret the book most nearly in the spirit of the book itself; which in truth is the only adequate standard of interpretation.

Such a literary approach invests every part and procedure of the poem, matter and form alike, with a new and transfiguring significance.

In its form — the splendor of its passion and imagery, the purity of its poetic diction, the fine articulation of its structure, the unity and continuity of its embodied idea — it yields in no respect to the most disciplined skill of the modern man of letters. Whatever age produced it was certainly an age in which the literary art had attained not only a high but a well-rounded development. If we do not linger further on its artistic form here, however, it is because it seems better to devote our space to considering the great effects which, by virtue of its art, real though hidden, it produces on those for whom it was intended; those readers to whom literature is not so much a form as a power. Even the study of literary forms soon pushes out into a region scholastic and technical,

leaving the all-men's plane. The reader addressed by universal literature cares not so much that a sonnet contains fourteen lines as that it embodies a fruitful thought; not so much that a great work is in poetry as that it is inspiring and uplifting. He can, however, walk with its protagonist; he can respond to the march of its action; he can share in its attitude toward life and nature and God and the unseen. Let us see how these great literary potencies appear in the Book of Job.

Take the great personage in which all the storm of word and action centres, the patriarch himself. "There are great personalities," says the writer already quoted, "who march through history with voices like a clarion trumpet and something like the glitter of swords in their hands. . . . Contact with them warms and kindles the mind." The remark applies not only to the world of actual fact but to that truer history which we call literature. Prometheus and Œdipus, Lear and Othello, are real and vital existences to us, teaching us by their great experiences no less truly than if we could visit their birthplaces and record their lives. So is Job, the Hebrew Prometheus; and the greatness of his patience, the sublimity of his allegiance to the godlike, are affected no whit by the question

whether we can find that city of the Hauran where he sat with the elders in the gate or not. It is as a great epical hero that he lives for us and for history. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord," was Saint James's lesson from the book; it may stand as the great object-lesson for the ages: as Othello stands for a noble heart tortured by jealousy; as Macbeth, in a manner wholly apart from his historical existence, stands in Shakespeare's pages for an ambitious soul dallying with and yielding to temptation. In such a gallery of great lives and passions the patriarch of Uz is to be counted among the most eminent. In calling him an epical hero I am not touching the comparatively idle question whether the poem is epic or dramatic. That question belongs to the outworks of the study. But what is of central importance is that here we have a man like ourselves, giving utterance to our most agonized thoughts, fearlessly approaching the mystery that encompasses us all, and conquering therefrom a character, a strength of honest manhood, that once gained may always stand the needy world in good stead. Such a conception as this is epic, whatever the outward form of the poem; the hero, with his words and acts, builds a veritable epos for

the centuries to enshrine among their great spiritual possessions.

Take again the action of the poem, the melody, so to speak, that most deeply determines its significance. An unduly narrow view that is which regards it as a religious debate on the question why God allows the righteous to suffer, — a view that raises the action no higher than the dogmatic standard of Eliphaz and Bildad and Zophar. But there is a great conflict of character going on, an action uttered between the lines which is sublimer than they have souls to see. It is the battle between the seeking for self and the seeking for the divine, between service for wages and service for love. Job on his ash-heap, in darkness and misery, groaning with disease, and deserted as an accursed being by friends, remains absolutely honest with himself and loyal to his ideal of the godlike, even against God Himself as it seems, until his faith battles its way to victory in the survival of good and right beyond the tomb. Thus in pain and conflict is discovered the great Newtonian law of the spiritual life, that the true service of God is not work for reward; it is a heart-loyalty, a hunger after God's presence, which survives loss and chastisement; which in spite of contradictory seeming cleaves to

what is godlike as the needle seeks the pole; and which reaches up out of the darkness and hardness of this life to the light and love beyond.[1] In the presence of such an action, the mere debate on the question why the righteous suffer is so small a part that it sinks to insignificance; it is only the wordy vehicle whereby the littleness of men, their false dignity, their hidebound traditions, their dogmatic intolerance, their vanity of knowledge, beat against the great rock-soul of the patriarch as he wages his battle for disinterested love. This central theme is for all men; in it is vitally involved the spiritual evolution of manhood. An epic for the world it is, therefore, not for theologian or scholar or Jew or Christian alone; a song for humanity, with the largeness, the sanity, the sublime beauty of universal literature.

An eye that so clearly discerns spiritual things as does that of the author of this Book of Job may be expected to look out steadily and truly into the world of nature. Accordingly we find here some of the greatest nature-poetry ever written, — poetry that reveals a keen eye for the beautiful, and es-

1 The writer begs to refer to a little book of his, "The Epic of the Inner Life" (Boston, 1891), from which (page 20) the above sentence is quoted.

pecially for the sublime in the world, for the wonders of the rocks and the wildness of the wastes, for cloud and snow and hail, for the power and wisdom displayed in animal life, for the grandeur of the seas and the heavens. Ancient and solemn the diction, but underneath it is a spirit of accurate observation, of unconventional fidelity to fact, which we too lightly think was first brought to expression by Wordsworth and Tennyson. In it all, too, is an insight which pierces beyond the phenomenal to the divine soul of all things; so that it is like nature as viewed by a celestial visitant, who sees not the mere outside, but those inner qualities that are struggling to make themselves visible through our muddy vesture of decay. It is the true nature-poetry, because it sees the world of nature folded in the arms of its Creator and everywhere obedient to His will.

In the same way the spirit of poetry, of the universal human heart, pulsates in all its approach to the greater mysteries of life and death. In the theme that forms the profound undertone of the world's most solemn literature — the theme of that Power which holds us in a grasp unevadable, which casts down and builds up, slays and makes alive as it will, — the heart of our author beats in unison

with the heart of the world, giving no oracular utterance as from the mountain of absolute revelation, but sending forth the cry of those who see through a glass, darkly, blinking nothing of the terror and the dread, yet in the face of it all assuming that attitude which best befits us as we enter the cloud, and which, for life and character, is the true solution of the world's enigma. It is much that from the depth of inexplicable mystery one voice has learned to say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." No greater utterance has ever illumined the pages of literature.

Such is a hint at some of the things which the Book of Job reveals when studied as a monument of the world's literature. Its melody is solemn and sublime, requiring the chastened ear to hear; but, rightly heard, it strikes the deepest chords of the human and the divine.

THE POETRY OF THE PSALMS.

VII.

THE POETRY OF THE PSALMS.

By HENRY VAN DYKE, D. D.,
New York City.

THE true lover of the Bible has an interest in all the elements of its life as an immortal book. He wishes to discern, and rightly appreciate, the method of its history, the spirit of its philosophy, the significance of its fiction, the power of its eloquence, and the charm of its poetry. He wishes this all the more because he finds in it something which is not in any other book: a vision of God, a hope for man, and an inspiration to righteousness which are evidently divine. As the worshipper in the Temple would observe the art and structure of the carven beams of cedar and the lily-work on the tops of the pillars the more attentively because they beautified the house of his God, so the man who has a religious faith in the Bible will study more eagerly and carefully the poetical adornments of the book in which the Holy Spirit dwells and speaks forever. It was in this temper that John Milton, a liberal believer and England's

loftiest master of poetic art, wrote of the Book of Psalms: "Not in their divine arguments alone, but in the very critical art of composition, the Psalms may be easily made to appear over all the kinds of lyric poetry incomparable."

To the English reader the poetical value of the Psalms is slightly obscured by two conditions.

The first of these is the loss of the ornament of verse. Hebrew poetry was undoubtedly written according to a system of rhythms and metres, and to some extent with certain forms of rhyme. The older scholars, like Lowth and Herder, held that such a system existed, but could not be recovered. Later scholars, like Ewald, evolved a system of their own. Modern scholarship, represented by such authors as Professors Cheyne and Briggs, is reconstructing and explaining more accurately the Hebrew versification. But, for the present at least, the only thing that is clear is that this system must remain obscure to us. It cannot be reproduced in English. Metrical versions of the Psalms are the least satisfactory. The poet Cowley said of them, "They are so far from doing justice to David that methinks they revile him worse than Shimei."[1]

[1] The Works of Mr. Abraham Cowley. 3 vols. London, 1710. Preface to Pindarique Odes, vol. i. p. 184.

We must learn to appreciate the poetry of the Psalms without the aid of those symmetries of form and sound in which they first appeared. This is a serious loss. Poetry without verse is still poetry, but it is like a bride without a bridal garment.

The second difficulty which the English reader finds in fully appreciating the Psalms is perhaps even greater. The most subtle charm of poetry is its suggestiveness; and much of this comes from the magical power which words acquire over memory and imagination from their associations. This intimate and personal charm must be left behind when a poem passes from one language to another. The accompaniment, the harmony of things remembered and beloved, which the very words of the song once awakened, is silent now. Nothing remains but the naked melody of thought. If this is pure and strong, it will gather new associations; as, indeed, the Psalms have already done in English, so that their familiar expressions have become charged with musical potency. And yet I suppose such phrases as "a tree planted by the streams of water," "a fruitful vine in the innermost parts of the house," "the mountains round about Jerusalem," can never bring to us the full sense of

beauty, the enlargement of heart, that they gave to the ancient Hebrews.

But, in spite of this double loss, in the passage from verse to prose, and from Hebrew to English, the poetry of the Psalms is so real and vital and imperishable that every reader feels its beauty and power.

It retains but one outward element of poetic form. This is that balancing of the parts of a sentence, one against another, to which Bishop Lowth first gave the familiar name of "parallelism."[1] The effect of this simple artifice, learned from Nature herself, is singularly pleasant and powerful. It is the rise and fall of the fountain, the ebb and flow of the tide, the tone and overtone of the chiming bell. The twofold utterance seems to bear the thought onward like the wings of a bird. A German writer compares it very exquisitely to "the heaving and sinking of the troubled heart."

We may easily distinguish several different manners in which this method is used by the psalmists. Three of the most important are illustrated in the carefully finished little poem on "The Two Paths" with which the book opens.

[1] Lowth, De Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum Praelectiones. Oxon. 1753.

In the first verse we have a triple parallel of resemblance. Three flowers seem to spring from a single stem:

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor standeth in the way of sinners,
Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

In the third verse the parallel is constructive. There is a symmetrical unfolding of the thought like the growth of a tree with alternate branches:

"He shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water,
That bringeth forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also doth not wither;
And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

In the last verse there is a strong parallel of contrast. It is the antithesis of life and death:

"For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous:
But the way of the wicked shall perish."

An intelligent and patient study of the Psalms will discover other illustrations and modifications of this method of expression, and thus increase our enjoyment of them.

Milton has already reminded us that they belong to the second of the three orders into which the Greeks, with clear discernment, divided all poetry:

the epic, the lyric, the dramatic. The Psalms are rightly called lyrics because they are concerned with the immediate and imaginative expression of real feeling. It is the personal and emotional note that predominates. They are inward, confessional, intense; outpourings of the quickened spirit; self-revelations of the heart. It is for this reason that we should never separate them in our thought from the actual human life out of which they sprang. We must feel the warm pulse of humanity in them in order to comprehend their meaning and eternal worth. So far as we can connect them with the actual experiences of men, it will help us to appreciate their reality and power.[1] The effort to do this will make plain to us some other things which it is important to remember.

We shall see at once that the book does not come from a single writer, but from many authors and ages. It represents the heart of man in communion with God through a thousand years of history, from Moses to Nehemiah, perhaps even to the time of the Maccabean revival. It is, therefore, something very much larger and better than an individual book. It is the golden treasury of lyrics

[1] The Story of the Psalms, New York, 1887 Charles Scribner's Sons.

gathered from the life of the Hebrew people. And this gives to it a singular and precious quality of brotherhood. The fault, or at least the danger, of modern lyrical poetry, is that it is too solitary and separate in its tone. It tends toward exclusiveness, over-refinement, morbid sentiment. Many Christian hymns suffer from this defect. But the Psalms breathe a spirit of human fellowship even when they are most intensely personal. The poet rejoices or mourns, in solitude it may be, but not alone. He is one of the people. He is conscious always of the ties that bind him to his brother men. Compare the intense selfishness of the modern hymn;

> "I can but perish if I go;
> I am resolved to try;
> For if I stay away, I know
> I shall forever die,"

with the generous penitence of the Fifty-first Psalm:

> "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways;
> And sinners shall be converted unto thee."

Another important thing to observe is that there are several different kinds of lyrics among the Psalms. Some of them are simple and natural outpourings of a single feeling, like the song of

trust in the incomparable Twenty-third Psalm. The One Hundred and Nineteenth rises to the dignity of an ode, which has been defined as "a strain of exalted and enthusiastic lyrical verse, directed to a fixed purpose, and dealing progressively with one dignified theme."[1] There are some didactic lyrics, like the Fifteenth and the Thirty-seventh; some lyrical ballads, like the One Hundred and Fifth, and the One Hundred and Sixth; many nature-lyrics, like the Twenty-ninth and the One Hundred and Fourth; and at least one epithalamium (the Hebrew title calls it a "Love-Song"), the Forty-fifth. I am inclined to think, also, that there are among the Psalms some dramatic lyrics, — poems composed by a later writer to express the feelings of a historic person, David or Solomon it may be, in certain experiences of his life.

We must recognize the varying poetic quality of the Psalms. There are some, like the Twenty-seventh, the Forty-second, the Forty-sixth, the Sixty-third, the Ninety-first, the Ninety-sixth, the One Hundred and Third, the One Hundred and Thirty-ninth, which are among the noblest poems

[1] English Odes. Selected by Edmund Gosse, London, 1889. Preface, p. xiii.

of the world. Others move on a lower level, and show the traces of effort and constraint. There are also manifest alterations and interpolations, which are not always improvements. Dr. Perowne, who is one of the wisest and most conservative of modern commentators, says, "Many of the Psalms have not come down to us in their original form,"[1] and refers to the alterations which the Seventieth makes in the Fortieth, and the Fifty-third in the Fourteenth. The last two verses of the Fifty-first were plainly added by a later hand. The whole book, in its present form, shows the marks of its compilation and use as the Hymn-Book of the Jewish people. Nor only in the titles, but also in the text, we can discern the work of the compiler, critic, and adapter, sometimes wise, but occasionally otherwise.

But the most essential thing in the appreciation of the poetry of the Psalms is the recognition of the three great qualities which distinguish it, and are evidences, not only of sublime genius, but also of spiritual inspiration.

The first of these is the deep and genuine love of nature. The psalmists delight in the vision of the world, and their joy quickens their senses to

[1] The Book of Psalms, 2 vols., London, 1883, vol. i. p. 82.

read alike the larger hieroglyphs of glory written in the stars and the delicate tracings of transient beauty on leaf and flower, to hear alike the mighty roaring of the sea and the soft sweet laughter of the rustling cornfields. But in all these they see and hear the handwriting and the voice of God. It is his presence that makes the world sublime and beautiful. The direct, piercing, elevating sense of this presence simplifies, enlarges, and ennobles their style, and makes it different from other nature-poetry. They never lose themselves, like Theocritus and Wordsworth and Shelley and Tennyson, in the contemplation and description of natural beauty. They see it, but they always sweep swiftly beyond it. Compare, for example, a modern versified translation with the Psalm itself.

> "The spacious firmament on high,
> With all the blue ethereal sky
> And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
> Their Great Original proclaim."[1]

Addison's descriptive epithets betray a conscious effort to make a splendid picture. But the psalmist felt no need of this; a larger impulse lifted him at once into "the grand style:"

[1] Joseph Addison, 1712.

"The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament sheweth his handiwork."

The second quality of the poetry of the Psalms is their passionate sense of the beauty of holiness. Keats was undoubtedly right in his suggestion that the poet must always see truth in the form of beauty. Otherwise he may be a philosopher, or a critic, or a moralist, but he is not a true poet. But we must go on from this standpoint to the Platonic doctrine that the highest form of beauty is spiritual and ethical. It is the harmony of the soul with the eternal music of the Good. And the highest poets are those who, like the psalmists, are most ardently enamored of righteousness. This fills their songs with sweetness and fire incomparable and immortal:

"The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever;
The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.
More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold:
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."

The third quality of the Psalms is their intense joy in God. No lover ever poured out the longings of his heart towards his mistress more eagerly

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than David voiced his desire and thirst for God. No conqueror ever sang of victory more exultantly than David rejoiced in the Lord, who is his light and his salvation, the strength of his life, and his portion forever.

After all, the true mission of poetry is to increase joy. It must, indeed, be sensitive to sorrows and acquainted with griefs. But it has wings given to it in order that it may bear us up into the ether of gladness. There is no perfect joy without love. Therefore love-poetry is the best. But the highest of all love-poetry is that which celebrates, with the Psalms,

> "That Love which is and was
> My Father and my Brother and my God." [1]

[1] Alfred Tennyson, The Death of Œnone, 1892. Doubt and Prayer, p. 105.

THE WISDOM LITERATURE.

VIII.

THE WISDOM LITERATURE.

By Prof. W. J. BEECHER, D.D.
Of Auburn Theological Seminary, New York.

THE term "Wisdom Literature" is applied to a class of Israelitish writings, of which the most notable are: in the Old Testament the books of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes, in the New Testament the book of James, and in the Apocrypha the books of Ecclesiasticus and of Wisdom. Some of the Psalms, also, belong to the literature of this class, and some of its characteristics appear in the Song of Solomon, and in very many of the vast body of writings, both Hellenistic and Hebraistic, which constitute the secondary sacred literature of Israel. Exact boundaries could be drawn only by the aid of landmarks found in the books just mentioned; and we may take those books themselves as typical, and avoid the trouble of further delimitation.

No treatment of a body of literature can be intelligible or interesting save to readers of that

literature, and this is especially true of the writings now under consideration. First of all, one should read the books that have been mentioned, read them all, read them more than once, read them as Browning or Dante are read by their admirers, read them with an appreciation of the fact that they are types of a class which possesses marked characteristics, and by which innumerable thinkers and authors have been influenced.

The English versions. — The reader who is entirely dependent on the English versions is at a disadvantage compared with the one who can read the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament and the Apocrypha. The disadvantage is greater in the case of the Wisdom writings than in most other cases. In three particulars it is especially important: First, our translations are in part revisions from earlier translations, which were to some extent dependent on Latin versions, and the Latin has no article; so that the distinction of definite and indefinite has become greatly confused in the translations. This is important in itself, and particularly important as obliterating a mark of poetic diction. Second, the tenses of the Hebrew verb distinguish between an action thought of as complete, and one thought of

as incomplete; and this distinction, neglected even in the grammars till within a few years, is not consistently maintained in our versions. Third, the Wisdom Literature has its vocabulary of technical words: wisdom, knowledge, correction, understanding, discretion, scorners, froward, and the like. Most of these words are significant by their derivation, and they are sharply distinct in their use; while our versions perpetually interchange them in translating, and are not careful to render by words that are equivalent in derivation and use.

In spite of these infelicities, however, the accessible English versions give a good enough idea of the Wisdom Literature to make the study of it worth while. But those who are so fortunate as to be able to read the original languages should especially note the three points that have just been indicated.

External form. — In the Wisdom Literature, the ordinary external form is that of the *māshāl*, or proverb. The Hebrew word, however, is wider in its meaning than the English word. It denotes a sententious statement, involving a similitude or a word-picture; commonly a maxim, that is, a proverb in the English sense, but often something different. In Num. xxi. 27, "they that speak in

proverbs" are represented as uttering a few lines of vivid poetical description. Each of the seven little poems of Balaam (Num. xxiii.–xxiv.) is introduced by a statement that Balaam "took up his proverb." Speaking in proverbs, in such instances, does not differ greatly from speaking in verse.

The typical *māshāl* is a poetic couplet, occasionally a triplet. The second line is complementary of the first, sometimes by repetition, sometimes by contrast, sometimes by addition, sometimes by likeness of grammatical structure, sometimes in other ways. The following consecutive proverbs illustrate several of these varieties of structure.

"The good sense of those who have it is a well of life,
While instruction by fools is folly.

"A wise man's heart gives his mouth good sense,
And gives added attainments upon his lips.

"Pleasant words are an honeycomb,
Sweet to the soul, and pleasant to the bone.

"There is a level way before a man,
And ways of death are the consequence of it"
(Prov. xvi. 22–25).

In recognition of this mode of composition, our translations of Proverbs, Job, the Wisdom Psalms, and Ecclesiasticus are now usually printed in lines, as poetry. If Ecclesiastes, James, and the Wisdom

of Solomon are not so printed, still it is easy to recognize in them the aphoristic form of expression, and ordinarily the parallelism, that characterize the *māshāl*.

This primary element, the proverb, is capable of an indefinite variety of combination. The book of Proverbs, for example, is divided by inscriptions into five parts (i.–ix.; x.–xxiv.; xxv.–xxix.; xxx.; xxxi.), the first three of which have the word *māshāl* in the title. The second of these five parts closes with two brief separate collections (xxii. 17–xxiv. 22; xxiv. 23–34), each having the title "Words of Wise [Men]." This makes in all seven divisions of the book. Of these the second and fifth are made up mainly of disconnected proverbs, though even here frequent instances occur in which several proverbs similar in form, or similar in effect, are grouped together. For example, in the sixteenth chapter, the first seven proverbs present each some sort of contrast between the ways of Yahweh and men's ways, and verses 10–15 are a series of proverbs concerning kings. In contrast with this, each of the other five parts of the book consists of topics, each topic treated consecutively, and the topics of each part arranged in an order that is intelligible, even if not

logical. The other five typical books of the Wisdom Literature all offer consecutive treatments of well defined subjects.

Essential character. — We turn from the external form of the Wisdom Literature to its internal character. This is expressed, of course, by the word "wisdom" as used differentially in the term. We must learn the essential character of the class largely by the study of this and the other related words. In studying the words, we may seek evidence from every possible source, but we must lay especial stress on the use of them in the Wisdom Literature itself.

We may here take advantage of the definition given by the writer of the first part of the book of Proverbs. He thus states the general purpose of his work:

> "That men may know wisdom and discipline,
> May discern sayings of discernment,
> May receive discipline in sound sense,
> In righteousness and judgment and rectitudes"
> (Prov. i. 2–3).

This purpose, he says, concerns both the inexperienced and the cultured, in short, every one:

> "That one may give to simple minded persons shrewdness,
> To a boy knowledge and device.
> A wise man will hearken that he may add attainment,

While a discerning man will obtain practical skill.
That men may discern proverb and aphorism,
Words of wise men, and their dark sayings" (4-6).

He proceeds to say that these advantages are neither possible without piety, nor superfluous with piety:

"The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge,
Wisdom and discipline fools despise" (7).

Finally, since he is about to take the rôle of a father, addressing his son and the sons of other men (i. 10; ii. 1; iii. 1; cf. iv. 1), he commends his instruction to young men. He says it will supplement the divine law[1] which their mothers have taught them, and which they are not to forsake.

"Hearken, my son, to the discipline of thy father,
And forsake not the divine law [taught] by thy mother;
For they are a graceful garland for thy head,
And necklaces for thy throat" (8–9).

In this extended statement, the leading word is the word "wisdom." Every one is familiar with the form of the Hebrew equivalent, *hokmah*. It is

[1] Without dispute, the Hebrew word *torah*, law, outside the book of Proverbs, is used exclusively of divine law. The same meaning will fit the context in every instance in the book of Proverbs. Hence there is no reason for not adhering to it.

thought of either as a personal attribute or a personal possession. From either point of view, it is knowledge and thinking power used for the best in regulating conduct. This definition may be established by an exhaustive induction of the instances. Other definitions are given, but they confound *hokmah* with some of its predicates. An especial vice of definition is that which resolves wisdom into religion. For certain purposes the two are identical, but wisdom in itself differs from religion. It may be an attribute either of God or of man, and is often impersonated as a woman. It has to do with minor morals, good manners, prudence, etc., and also with the highest ethical principles, and with the divine acts in the forming and government of the universe. But in them all, we have persistently the conception of wisdom as knowledge and thinking power used for the best in regulating conduct.

The man who knows much, but fails to think, is not a wise man; nor the man who has knowledge and thought, but fails to subject his life to them; nor the right-meaning man, however religious, who fails to know and think. It is possible to exercise wisdom in trifles, or to fail to exercise it in the most important matters.

The word "wisdom" is central in this class of literature. It is attended by a long list of subsidiary words, and they are all worth careful study; but we must confine ourselves to a few specimens, and we will take them in the order in which they occur in the lines that have been cited. The word translated "discipline" properly denotes correction. One teaches another by correcting his mistakes. So the word passes, in one direction, to mean chastisement, and in another, to mean instruction or training. To "discern" is to see things apart, to note the differences between things. Other similar English words are "discriminate" and "distinguish." The same physical basis belongs to the Hebrew word. In our versions it is oftenest translated by "understand." The word rendered "sound sense" is one which passes over into the meaning of successful action. It denotes the kind of good sense that enables one to succeed in what he undertakes. "Righteousness" is good standing before the law, or before public opinion, "judgment" is established usage, "rectitude" is moral straightness. The writer of this first treatise in Proverbs says that his purpose is that his readers may take cognizance of wisdom, and that the effect of this will be, among other things, good standing

in the community, right relations with established usage, personal uprightness.

The technical vocabulary of the Wisdom Literature in Hebrew includes some dozens of such words. It would be fruitful work to make an exhaustive study of them, examining each by itself, and classifying them; but we must content ourselves with specifying certain results. These writings abound in instances of clear observation and acute distinction among the phenomena of external nature, the phenomena of the human mind, and the various facts which we now distribute to Ethical, Economical, Sociological, and Theological science. In each of these departments, the statements of doctrine made in this literature cover much ground, and are of exceptionally excellent quality. It would be difficult to name another body of literature which, within the same space, calls attention so effectively to so many of the things that every person ought to know. It is characteristic, however, that the interest never centres in knowing for its own sake; the wise man has conduct constantly in mind.

Have we here a Philosophy? — The question is raised whether the *hokmah* literature should be regarded as philosophical. That depends on our

definition of Philosophy. There is here no arranging of the facts into universal systems, no speculative questioning as to the whence and the whither of existing beings, no inquiry "controlled by the rigid laws of logic, and carried on in a scientific method." With a definition of Philosophy which makes these to be essential elements of it, the Hebrew literature has no Philosophy. But if a keen and genuine and fruitful study of the universe and the purposes for which we are in it constitutes a Philosophy, irrespective of conventional lines and methods, then this literature is in the highest degree philosophical, and its *hākām*, its "wise man," is above all others the man who has a Philosophy of life.

The "wise men."— Questions are also raised as to the standing of the *h'kāmîm*, "the wise men," the sages. What significance is there in the fact that priests or prophets are not mentioned, save that Job xii. 19 is verbally an exception, in the Wisdom books of the Old Testament? Are the sages to be regarded as a class of men like the priests or the prophets; and if so, were their relations those of rivalry, or of co-operation? On these questions we have no evidence save what we may gather from the phenomena of the literature. The

sages were a class, certainly; the mere fact that they may be called by a common name proves that; but not a class in the sense in which the priests or the prophets were classes. They are contrasted with several sorts of men, notably with the "simple" (Prov. i. 4; viii. 5, etc.), those who through youth or through weakness of character have not learned from experience; and with "scorners" (i. 22; ix. 12, etc.), who refuse to take life seriously, who practise thoughtless or unreasonable skepticism. A wise man, as distinguished from a scorner or a simpleton, is one who uses knowledge and thinking to govern his conduct. If he has gifts of utterance, he is thereby further differentiated. Wise men, having similar tastes, associate together, and are thought of together. Beyond this, we have no evidence of any ancient guilds or societies or successions of *h'kāmîm*. The silence concerning priests and prophets arises from the different point of view. According to tradition, the Wisdom books of the Old Testament were written by prophets as well as its other books; and there is no incongruity in this. Why should not a man see truth at one time from the point of view of divine revelation, and at another time from that of the highest exercise of the human faculties?

There was cant in the world during the prophetic ages, as there is now; and there may then have been reasons, as now, why cultured men, writing for thoughtful people, should adopt different phraseology from that of the common orthodoxy, even though the truths they uttered were not different.

Ethical Standard. — There is a noteworthy difference between the ethical standard of the canonical Wisdom books and that of the uncanonical. Ecclesiastes is to be regarded as an inquiry, and its pessimistic affirmations as tentative; and certain opinions expressed in Job are those of the characters introduced as speaking, and not those of the book itself. With this in mind, it is safe to affirm that the morality of the canonical Wisdom books does not differ essentially from that of the New Testament. It is true that these books deal largely with common things, with matters of thrift and prudence and homely comfort, as distinguished from right and wrong. Familiar instances, taken at random, are the failings of the slothful man, good manners when at a noble's table, the disagreeableness of the brawling woman in the wide house, the risks in becoming surety for others, the folly of needless intermeddling, and very many others like these. But it is not just to

infer that the morality taught in these books is merely prudential, for there is no conflict between precepts like these and the highest ethical principles. These books inculcate utter trust in God, a right conduct that springs from a right heart, perfect uprightness as the ideal of life, a whole obedience (Ec. xii. 13; Prov. iii. 12, 26, 3–7; ii. 20–21; iv. 18, 23, 27; viii. 13, and innumerable other passages), and none of their utterances in commendation of worldly prudence contradict these expressions of higher truth.

This stands out the more strongly when we note the contrast presented in the Wisdom books of the Apocrypha. In Ecclesiasticus, for example, there are scores of prudential sayings, and a good number of higher ethical sayings that compare favorably with those in the book of Proverbs; but along with these there are cynical sayings, and even sayings advocating wrong conduct, such as do not appear in the three Wisdom books of the Old Testament. Among those that come first to hand are the following:

"Where no hedge is, the possession is spoiled;
And he that hath no wife will wander up and down sighing"
(Ecclus xxxvi. 25).

"Hast thou a wife after thy mind? put her not away;
But do not resign thyself to one who is hateful" (vii. 26).

"My son, let tears fall down over a dead person,

. . . . . .

Weep bitterly, and make great moan,
And make lamentation, as may befit him,
For a day or two, lest thou be evil spoken of;
And then comfort thyself for thy heaviness;
For of heaviness cometh death,
And heaviness of heart boweth down the strength"
(xxxviii. 16–18).

Whether we account for it by a theory of inspiration or in some other way, the Wisdom books of the Bible have a higher spiritual tone than those of the Apocrypha.

Literary and historical value. — The literary details of the Wisdom Literature constitute an especially attractive subject, which can here be barely touched. These books are rich in metaphor, comparison, allusion, and other figures of speech, and especially rich in those beauties of figurative language which are capable of translation from one language into another. They are remarkably rich in humor, though this is a fact which most readers fail to appreciate, by reason of our accustomed solemn way of looking at everything in the Bible. They are rich in pictures of ancient Israelitish life. Agricultural operations, home life, city life, street life, family life, current fashions of dress

and thought and sociability, are all mirrored in them.

They are also sources, not yet well worked, for the history of the religion of Israel. The books of Job and Proverbs, silent concerning priests and prophets, are not silent concerning priestly and prophetic functions. They recognize various forms of sacrifice. They recognize law, *torah*, as existing in Israel, the permanent product of prophetic vision (Prov. xxix. 18, etc.), taught to boys by their mothers (i. 8; vi. 20), inculcated by sages (iii. 1; iv. 2; vii. 2; xiii. 14), obligatory upon all men (Job xxii. 22; Prov. vi. 23; xxviii. 4, 7, 9; xxix. 18; xxxi. 26).

The dates of the Wisdom Literature. — The book of James is now regarded as one of the earliest of the New Testament books. Ecclesiasticus was written in Hebrew either at the beginning of the second century B. C., or a century earlier. The Wisdom of Solomon was written in Greek at some date between those of the two just mentioned. The historical situation in Ecclesiastes is that of Solomon's reign. The reasons that are given for rejecting or modifying this view fade out on examination. The syntax, however, and other linguistic marks, are generally regarded as proving that the

book is nearly the latest written of the Old Testament books.

None of these belong to the golden age of the *hokmah* literature. They and their numerous imitations in the secondary writings are of a later school, and one that lacks the freshness that appears in Job and Proverbs. Omitting Job, because that book is treated elsewhere in this volume, the book of Proverbs stands for us as the original representative of the literature of this class. That this book comes in part from Solomon, and in part from other sources, no one disputes. Solomon's part should be estimated at a maximum, rather than a minimum. Possibly the precepts most decidedly in contrast with the conduct of Solomon are the very ones he is most likely to have written.

THE LOVE-SONG OF THE BIBLE.

IX.

THE LOVE-SONG OF THE BIBLE.

By the REV. WILLIAM ELLIOT GRIFFIS, D. D.
Ithaca, New York.

I PROPOSE in this paper to give my reading and understanding of that book in the Hebrew Bible called Shir Ha Shirim, or the Song of Songs. I find this poem, of about five thousand words, set between the books of Job and Ruth, in the middle of that division of the Hebrew Bible which is outside of the Law and the Prophets, and called by Jesus "The Psalms," and by the rabbis Kethubim, — that is, mixed or varied scriptures or Literature. In the English Bible I find it almost in the middle of the Old Testament. In the Hebrew sacred library I read a history of the nation which is especially full and rich concerning the time of the empire of David and Solomon. I also find laws, traditions, customs, poetry, prophecy, which reflect with marvellous exactness, color, and vividness the life and the thoughts of the people, both in the palace and in the hut. It is in the light of

this literature and in accordance with the general story of the Hebrew people, especially in the time of Solomon, that I read, interpret, and form my judgment concerning the Song of Songs, and not according to a system of notions or an interpretation invented, by those who were alien to the Hebrews and to their literature, a thousand years later.

On studying the literary structure of the poem, and paying close attention to the refrains, versicles, parallelisms, and careful use of peculiar words and technical terms, withal noticing the differences in the speeches and dialogues and the diverse characters represented, I conclude that the poem is a drama in which there are three principal characters: one is a royal lover, King Solomon; another is a rustic lover, who has won and who ultimately holds the heart of her who is the chief character, — the Shulammite. The movement progresses in five acts and fourteen scenes, culminating in a happy marriage and the enjoyments of the nuptial festival.

The opening scene is in the royal harem. Solomon has made a collection of beautiful women, not as a monster of lust, but with much the same purpose and motives as men to-day collect fine

horses, or it may be elegant paintings or statuary. The scene is ushered in with a company of elegantly arrayed women. We hear the prattle of these ladies, whose aim and ambition of life is to win the favor of their royal lord and master. One sings, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth;" another, in indirect address to her royal lover, cries, "For thy love is better than wine." Again in chorus they sing,

> "Thy name is as ointment poured forth;
> Therefore do the virgins love thee."

Again the song breaks out, "Draw me," and the chorus answers, "We will run after thee." Again the song, "O that the king would bring me to his chamber!"

Again the chorus sings, each lady agreeing to sink all jealousy and congratulate the fortunate one elected by the king with an invitation to his presence:

> "We will be glad and rejoice in thee,
> We will make mention of thy love more than of wine:
> Rightly do they love thee."

Thus with song and jest do the harem beauties talk of their lord, Solomon, when, lo! among

these splendidly arrayed "Daughters of Jerusalem" is ushered a sun-burned country lass. She is from the village of Shunem, or, as later spelled, Shulam. Solomon has seen her, and invited her to his harem. Among these luxurious ladies, after due attention to the arts of the harem, even as Esther was prepared for Ahasuerus, she will be apparelled and perfumed for the king's presence. Hear her modestly and shyly say, "I am black." "But comely," they answer. "As the tents of Kedar," she says. "As the curtains of Solomon," they flatteringly insist. "Look not upon me, because I am swarthy, because the sun has looked upon and burned me. My mother's sons were incensed against me, they made me keeper of the vineyard; but mine own vineyard have I not kept."

Thus, after the Oriental fashion, with profuse and self-deprecatory apologies, the rustic maid enters the harem. Homesickness comes quickly upon her, and she is overheard by the harem ladies talking about her own true lover, who is afar off feeding his flock. The "Daughters of Jerusalem," nettled at the idea of her not being pleased to be among such splendid company, reply, and perhaps with a touch of sarcasm, "If you do not know, O prettiest of women, go along, away among

the footsteps of your lover's flock, and feed the kids beside the shepherd's tent."

The dialogue of the women ended, the scene changes from the harem, and the Shulammite finds herself before dread Solomon, who makes love, in truly condescending style, very much as he would examine a new horse or think of a new purchase. He addresses her by a word that does not suggest burning passion. He compares her to one of his mares. After speaking of her comely cheeks and plaits of hair, he promises to adorn her neck with jewels, and make her braids of hair brilliant with gold and silver. Yet the maiden thinks only of her betrothed lover, who is far from her. She calls him by pet names: he is her "spikenard;" he is her "bundle of myrrh," of which she makes a bosom bouquet; he is a "cluster of henna-flowers;" she applies to him the term "beloved" (*dod*), which she never throughout the poem applies to Solomon. The king praises her dove-like eyes, using the word "my dear" or "my love," which throughout the poem is contrasted with her term of endearment, "my beloved." To his flattering words are opposed her remembrances of the outdoor trysting-place, the bower of greenery, the beams of which were cedars, and the

rafters firs. As for herself, she tells the king that she is nothing but a little Sharon rose, only a valley lily, though Solomon gallantly responds that she is "a lily among thorns." To herself she names the apple-tree among the trees of the woods, likening to this rich and fruitful tree her beloved, who so often brought her to the vineyard-house, spreading over her the banner of love. Homesick and lovesick, she remembers his caresses in the days of her country life and freedom. Then follows that refrain which is properly translated in the Revision. Occurring several times throughout the poem, it divides one act from another, and gives the spirit of the whole book. She adjures the ladies of the harem, by the creatures most free and untrammelled in nature, the roes and the hinds of the fields, that they "stir not up nor awaken love, until it please."

The second act is one of memory and reminiscence. Although this matchless drama may actually have been sung and represented at ancient Jewish weddings, yet it is less logical in historical and chronological sequence, less like the perfect development of a Greek drama, but represents rather the development of the feelings of a woman's heart. It is an emotional, an ethical drama; its

culmination is toward a truth, a doctrine, *chokma*, or wisdom. In a word, it is in hearty accord with the Hebrew genius and with the spirit of the wisdom literature of the Bible, as well as in harmony with Israelitish history, life, thought, and custom.

"The voice of my beloved." She is back in her country home. She hears the voice of her lover, who is active as a gazelle. Through the lattice he shows himself. He tenderly addresses her. He bids her rise up and come away. He describes springtime and the dawning of a new world of beauty. He calls her his dove. He wishes not only to see her face but to hear her voice, and so she sings the vineyard song, a fragment of which we have on the page before us, and which probably for a hundred springtimes echoed on the Palestinian hills:

> "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vineyard,
> For our vineyards are in blossom."

How differently she answers *this*, her shepherd lover — "My beloved is mine, and I am his."

In the next scene, which begins with the third chapter in our modern division of the book, the scene is laid in dreamland. We have here the first

of several visions of the night which come to her while her thoughts are disturbed as she dwells amid the new and strange surroundings of the palace and of Jerusalem city, which is full of streets, of broad ways, of police, and strange characters from many lands. "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth." In her dreams she goes out into the thoroughfares of the city. Guilelessly she asks the watchmen if they had seen her lover. Only a little while after leaving them she finds him, she seizes him by the hand and takes him into her mother's home; that is, in the space and time annihilation of dreams, she is immediately out of Jerusalem and into her country home under her mother's roof. The act and scene conclude with the refrain as before; the harem ladies, "Daughters of Jerusalem," are adjured by the free gazelles not to excite or incite the passion of love, by either bribes, cajolement, or threats, until love spring spontaneously.

Solomon, receiving no encouragement from the beautiful girl whom he has invited to join his harem, and piqued at finding her thoughts still dwelling on her country lover and home, now resolves to make her a princess and wed her, lifting her far above the grade of the ordinary maiden or palace

attendant, or of concubine, — that is, of lady with servants, — and to give her a place among his "threescore queens." We find him arraying himself as a bridegroom, and giving the Shulammite a place in the royal palanquin.

Act third begins with the procession, about which various citizens of Jerusalem are asking questions. One inquires, "Who is this that cometh up out of the wilderness?" Another answers by telling of the gorgeous travelling-car of the king, surrounded by his splendid body-guard of sixty veterans; another describes this magnificent body of cavalry; another notes the palanquin, its outward splendor and its inward decoration, — the beautiful girl who has moved Solomon's ambition and passion; still another bids — not the inmates of the harem, Daughters of Jerusalem, but — the ladies of the city, the "Daughters of Zion," to go forth and behold King Solomon as he enters the city wearing the crown which his mother once placed upon his head when he wedded a queen.

Scene second, opening with the fourth chapter in our division, reveals the royal lover once more making suit. His words are those of a well-bred man of luxury and civilization, and his praise of the Shulammite makes a beautiful poem, a sonnet

full of lovely phrases and references to things before the eye of a man accustomed to the polish and splendor rather than the toil and simplicity of life. Between his vocabulary and range of ideas and that of the rustic lover we find as much difference as between the table luxuries of the Norman, — beef, veal, pork, mutton, — and the ox, calf, swine, and sheep of the Saxons; the conquerors enjoying the delicious product on the table, while the conquered lived among the hoofs. The lips of the fair damsel are as a "thread" of scarlet; her temples are like a "slice" of pomegranate; her necklace of coins reminds him of the comely "tower of David," on which the round shields of the veterans are hung as trophies; she is all fair, and in her is no spot. But her answer (misplaced in the sixth verse) is that she prefers to get herself away to the mountain of myrrh, — a reference to her home and lover.

In scene third, beginning with chapter fourth, verse eighth, of our version, we have the shepherd lover, who — whether the action be represented as only in the maiden's mind and breast, or whether he comes in his anxiety to the city and under the palace windows — begs her to escape with him to Lebanon, from the lion's den of the palace. She

has ravished his heart; she is his love, his sister. Her lips drop as the honeycomb, the smell of her garments is like the smell of Lebanon; she is chaste and pure, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. She is all that precious spices and the imagery of the beautiful in nature can suggest; she is as the flowing stream from Lebanon. In a word, the vocabulary and the imagery of this lover, so different from those of the royal admirer, are of things not in palaces but in outdoor life.

How differently does she answer this lover! She not only yields to him, but she prays to the north wind to come and blow upon her, his garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. She invites him, her "beloved," to come into his garden and eat his precious fruits. In verse first, chapter fifth, we hear him in his intoxication of delight enjoying the presence of her whom his soul loves.

When this scene of love, whether represented as in objective reality or in the maiden's imagination, is over, her excitement over the strenuous proposal of the king causes her disturbed sleep to inclose within its boundaries another dream.

"I was asleep, but my heart waked.
It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying," etc.

Then follows that touching scene, worded with exquisite beauty and transfigured by the writer of the Revelation. The lover has come after the toil of the day. It is night. He waits long and patiently in the dewy night air; but within, the vineyard girl, tired out, has lain down to sleep. Though her own beloved calls, how can she rise and dress; how again soil her clean washed feet upon the earthy floor of her cottage? The discouraged lover, after trying to open the door, goes away. Then her heart moves within her. She rises to draw back the bolt, finding on it drops of the perfume, the myrrh, which even the poor man could afford. With that utter obliteration of the relations of time and space which we find in dreams, she rushes out in Jerusalem to find him. The watchmen, finding her and wrongly suspecting her, strike her, pull off her veil, and insult her. Awaking from her troubled dream, she adjures the harem ladies, if they find her beloved, to tell him that she is lovesick for him.

Irritated at her obstinacy, and tired of hearing about her lover, the jewelled Daughters of Jerusalem, as the fourth act opens, ask her: "What is thy beloved more than any other beloved?" Then her answer gushes forth in a torrent of compliment

about her lover, who is to her a transfiguration of all graces and charms. "My beloved is white and ruddy; the chiefest among ten thousand." The raven's blackness must describe his hair; the doves in the water-brooks his eyes; spice-beds and sweet herbs his cheeks; gold and beryl, ivory and sapphire, are called to hint at the splendor of his white skin and blue veins, while all the resources of the palace in precious stones, metals, and decorations are necessary to shadow forth his splendors. At the opening of chapter six in our version they ask where he is, that they may with her seek him. Giving them an evasive answer about spice-beds and his business of leading sheep to feed in the gardens, while he gathers lilies, she once more declares, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."

Again the royal lover appears, and declares that the Shulammite is more beautiful than the city of Tirzah, while she is as comely as Jerusalem, yet also terrible as an army with banners. He praises her teeth and her temples. He declares that while there are sixty queens, fourscore bedfellows, and attendant virgins without number, she is undefiled and but one, and that even the ladies of the harem are all praising her.

In the third scene we find the Daughters of Jerusalem, now thoroughly excited and jealous, inquiring into the antecedents of this country girl, who is "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as a bannered host." Then the Shulammite gives her autobiography. She tells how, when a young girl, rejoicing in her new-found love, she casts off her veil, and goes singing in the springtime into the gardens to see the buds of the nut-trees, the valley plants, the vine, and the pomegranates, when suddenly she finds herself right in the midst of the splendid cavalcade of King Solomon's host. He is making a journey past Shunem, and he and his courtiers are charmed with the sight of the rosy-cheeked young girl, in all the gladness and poetry of young maidenly life. They call to her at once as she turns to fly: "Return, return, O Shulammite!" To the ears that love the poetry of sound, the Hebrew words suggest Tennyson's "Bugle-Song," so sweet is the melody of the language. She turns to inquire why they look upon her, and the answer is: "As upon the dance of Mahanaim," — that is, the dance of the angel hosts, as when Jacob saw the vision of angels in their motions of loveliness, of beauty, and called the place Two Camps.

Now, in the harem, after she has told her story, the ladies insist upon her dancing the same dance which she, with her Hebrew sisters, so often performed in order to celebrate joyfully and religiously the events in the life of their great ancestor, Jacob. Then, beginning at the seventh chapter in our division, follows a superb description of the dancing of a beautiful woman. As her fair limbs show the poetry of motion, we have a description by the ladies, probably a collection of many exclamations of delight, of the virgin Shulammite dancer. They wind up their description of the various parts of her beautiful body by declaring that "the king is held captive in the tresses of her hair." Unknown, perhaps, to her, or, it may be even to the harem ladies, the king has been looking on. In the sixth verse of the seventh chapter we recognize again his language: "How fair and how pleasant art thou, O Love, for delights!" Then, in verses seven to nine, he utters his determination to break her will, to make her yield to his embraces. But when he declares that "thy mouth is like the best wine," she interrupts him by saying, —

"That goeth down smoothly for my beloved."

Here ends the drama, so far as the king and the ladies of the harem are concerned, for, before them, she utters her declaration, —

> "I am my beloved's,
> And his desire is toward me."

Then, thinking of the near future, she utters in imagination her invitation to her beloved to go out into the vineyard, where she will give him her love. She tells him of the precious things, new and old, which she has laid up in anticipation of her marriage. Like a pure and absolutely guileless maiden, she would have him to be as her brother. Even if she should find him without, she would kiss him, "yea, and none would despise me." Sharing her confidences with her mother, she would bring him into her home. Then, forever bidding farewell to those who would wrongly advise her, she once more adjures the Daughters of Jerusalem (yet not this time by the wild animals, for she is progressing into the experience and thought that love is of God) not to excite or incite love until it springs spontaneously. Love born of God grows not in the harem.

Then follows the description of the journey toward home, her arrival amid the scenes of her

childhood, where she recognizes even the apple-tree under which mutual love was first awakened, and the cottage where his mother was born. In verse six we have the culmination of the thought, the teaching, the *chokma*, or wisdom, of the book. She bids him to seal her upon his heart and bind her as a jewel upon his arm.

> "For love is strong as death,
> Intense love as unyielding as Sheol:
> The flashes thereof are flashes of fire,
> The lightning of Jehovah."

This, then, is the *tendency*, the purpose, the doctrine, of the book which holds its honored place in the library of inspiration. Love between man and woman is not an animal passion, not merchandise to be bought or sold, not a social prize or weapon, but a fire implanted by God Himself, of Him and from Him.

Such a love cannot be quenched by many waters, nor can it be drowned in the floods. If a man — even though he be King Solomon — would give all his substance to buy love, he, though a monarch, would be utterly despised by her.

Then follows the entertainment of the guests, with witty charades or riddles such as we find were given at the time of Samson's wedding, and which

the young men attempted vainly to guess. The first is founded upon a reminiscence of her girlhood, when her stepbrothers held council as to what they should do when their little undeveloped sister should round out into lovely maidenhood; when lovers should come around her, pouring out their flatteries and offering their attention. Should she be a "wall" — built firm and strong on principle and resisting improper suggestions — they would build upon her head a "turret of silver," and enlarge her horn upon which should hang the marriage veil, well loaded with the coins of dowry. But should she be a "door" — opening to miscellaneous flirtations and improprieties — then they would inclose her with boards of cedar; they would marry her to a man who should be severe, or shut her up in a harem, noble's or king's as the case might be.

Can her rustic friends guess the riddle? Possibly not. Then she declares triumphantly that her experience makes the riddle clear:

> "I am a wall, and my breasts like the towers thereof:
> Then was I in his eyes as one that found peace."

By resisting Solomon she kept not only virtue but principle and a clear conscience; her duty also to

God, as one who had not abused his gifts, being fulfilled. Another charade tells of Solomon and *his* vineyard which *he* let out unto keepers; that is, Solomon, instead of loving one wife and having a home according to God's appointment, shared his affections and himself with hundreds of others, even the women of his harem. But she is quite willing that Solomon shall have the thousand, and those that keep the fruit, their reward in jewels and favor; but as for her,

> "My vineyard which is mine is before me."

Then the lover, ever in the background, but now happy and triumphant, pleads, since her companions have heard her wit and song, that he may hear her liquid words. Now the curtain drops on a happy married life, and the private joys of home begin. In her words which we read, there may be a dash of innocent coquetry. Nevertheless they have in them the sweet, fond yielding of one woman to one man for love and for life, according to the appointment of God in Eden. This we read as the bride's final words which close the feast:

> "Make haste, my beloved;
> Be thou like to a roe or a young hart
> Upon the mountain of spices."

Resisting all further enlargement of thought or comment, I wish to say, in closing, that, with the most careful study and scrutiny, I have not been able to find in all this drama one unchaste word or one impure thought (save as may be attributed in one instance to Solomon).

A STUDY OF ISAIAH.

X.

A STUDY OF ISAIAH.

By the REV. WM. H. COBB, D.D.
Congregational Library, Boston.

AFTER the manner of the leading Shakespearean scholars of the present day, who are disciples rather than critics, let us sit at the feet of Isaiah and gather inductively some perceptions which may help us realize what he has bequeathed to us. Note:

I. The Vast Reach of his Thought.

I leave out of account the passages commonly considered doubtful as to their authorship; not, indeed, all that has ever been suspected, from Döderlein to Duhm, — else, what would be left? — but the following thirty-nine chapters (a few verses excepted); xiii., xiv., xxiv. — xxvii., xxxiv. — lxvi. What remains comprises about twenty-seven chapters, and is even of less extent than this might indicate, being scarcely longer than the sixteen

chapters of the gospel by Mark. In a single hour — as I was surprised to find by experiment — one can read it all through. It is absurd, therefore, to suppose that there remains to us more than a small fraction of the oracles which this prince of prophets uttered during a ministry of more than forty years. Still, let us be thankful for such precious fragments. Here alone we are to find our material.

Isaiah was a man of the city, a statesman at court; his environment is obvious on almost every page, but it never hampers his power of expression. Amid the scenes that fill his moving panorama we catch glimpses of lords and fine ladies, of great men with their chariots, and eloquent orators, of princes and judges and rulers. We cannot fail to observe the versatility of genius that crowds every inch of this contracted canvas with its appropriate figure. Nothing is too small or too great to escape his eye. For in a moment we have left the bustle of the city; the farmer is harrowing after the plough, casting abroad the fitches and putting in the wheat in rows; we see his cartwheel and his horses. Yonder is a vineyard in a fruitful hill, with its tower, trench, and wine-press. Beyond, the wind is rising on Carmel; it strips off the forest

foliage, and tosses the sea below, till the moan and roar of the waters remind our seer of the nations in commotion, surging one against another in this crisis of history; and so from the theatre of Nature he passes to the actors that fill it.

A stroke of his brush, and there winds through the desert of the South a slow procession, carrying on the humps of camels the treasures that are carried in vain; Egypt the blusterer sitteth still. To the West, great merchant-ships are whitening the Mediterranean. Pass over to Kittim, pass over to Tarshish; Tyre's traffickers are the honorable of the earth. Nearer, to the North, lies Samaria, marked for speedy destruction, but as yet fair to see; the fading flower at the head of the fat valley. And hither from the distant East marches with swift tread — none weary nor stumbling — their horses' hoofs like flint and their chariot-wheels like a whirlwind, the dreaded host of Assyria, Jehovah's battle-axe, that will beat against the hill of Shomer and destroy it, that will dash against Mount Zion only to be broken in pieces.

A student of Isaiah's writings perceives the impropriety of that divorce between sacred and secular which is even yet so firmly rooted in popular prejudice. Our authorized version of the Bible

bears the legend "appointed to be read in churches," and the Revisers have striven to imitate its solemn dignity of style. But Isaiah never gave his discourses in churches. There were no churches then, not even the "Jewish Church." Isaiah spoke right forth in the king's palace, or the highway of the fuller's field, in season or out of season, applying moral principles and spiritual insight to everyday politics and everyday life as Jehovah gave him utterance.

And how varied that utterance! Every passion is open to his ready portrayal. If the hearts of king and people are swayed as forest-trees are swayed by the wind, he perceives and depicts it. He sounds the whole gamut of human emotion, from the terror and anguish caused by the capture of Babylon to the burst of exultation from the inhabitant of Zion upon the overthrow of Sennacherib's host. Equally strong is our author on the intellectual side; witness the fulness of his vocabulary, the logical arrangement of his matter, the rich variety of his style, the loftiness of his tone. Prose and verse are alike facile to his speech. He can sing with the lyric poets; observe the two psalms in chapter xii., and the song of the vineyard in chapter v. Often again we find an epic quality

in his oracles; that against Tyre, for example, and those against the Syro-Ephraimite league, and the burden of the valley of vision. Still more marked is the presence of the dramatic element; beginning at the moment of his first entrance, when like the Greek chorus he calls upon heaven and earth to witness the ingratitude of Israel; clearly manifest in the watchman of chapter xxi., who brings tidings from Babylon and answers the call from Edom; specially prominent at the close of chapter x., when the terrible Assyrian speeds from point to point till at Nob he shakes his hand at the mount of the daughter of Zion; and at this crisis — *dignus vindice nodus* — the divine actor steps upon the stage and Lebanon falls by a mighty one.

The vast reach of Isaiah's thought appears thus in his familiarity with Nature, and with the geography, history, and contemporary politics of his own and other nations; and also in his penetration into all spheres of human life, intellectual, emotional, and moral.

II. Some particular Qualities of Isaiah's Style.

1. *Compression.* — This results mathematically now that we have observed the breadth of his

compass and the brevity of his writings; but the fact can also be established inductively. In xxix. 16 the one Hebrew word *haphk'kem* represents six words in A.V. and five in R.V. (ye turn things upside down). In xxiii. 1, where both versions agree, Tyre "is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in." The Hebrew for these quoted words is simply *shuddadh mibbayith mibbo.* At the close of xxx. 22 the contrast is sharp between the prophet's terseness and the stately propriety of the translation: "Thou wilt say unto it, get thee hence." What Isaiah said was *tsē tōmar lo*, "hist! you 'll say to it," — a rendering which could find no place in a version appointed to be read in churches.

The compression of style in Isaiah does not result in obscurity, as is often the case in Thucydides, in Tacitus, in Browning; the next quality we notice is the reverse of obscurity.

2. *Vividness.* — This sometimes springs directly *from* compression, as in the passage last quoted, which belongs as well to this head as to that. Isaiah's vivid style often takes the form of contrast, as in his opening words, where the heavens are opposed to the earth, and these taken together to Jehovah, and he to his sinful creature, and he

to the faithful ox and ass. Moreover, our prophet has an imitative quality that is peculiarly vivid. Homer's πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης is not worthy to be mentioned in comparison with Isaiah's Ocean Symphony (xvii. 12–14), which reproduces the very music of the sea in its low murmurs, its prolonged reverberations, and its dashing, seething foam. The vivid description in xxxi. 4 of the lion growling and the young lion over his prey, undismayed at the shepherds who attack him, has been compared with Iliad xviii. 161 f., which might almost be called a free translation of it.

3. *Humor.* — Isaiah is by no means always in a serious mood. We enjoy his hit at the daughters of Zion (iii. 16), who walk with outstretched necks and ogling eyes, mincing always as they walk, and tinkling with their feet. When Ahaz was troubled at the confederacy of Pekah and Rezin, Isaiah (vii. 4) bade him not be dismayed at these two tails of smoking firebrands. Assyria had been summoned by Ahaz at great expense to defend him from the neighboring league. "You may hire the razor but I will shave with it," was the word of Jehovah (vii. 20). There is a comical element in the expedition of the ambassadors to Egypt (xxx. 6), marching with a great train, with great

toil, with great treasure, in great peril, but to what end? Parturiunt montes, nascetur — *Rahab, hēm shābeth.*

A few verses further on, the excited hopes of the Egyptian party break out, whereupon Isaiah interpolates thus:

> "But ye said,
> 'Nay, for on steeds we will fly,'
> well then, you *shall* fly,
> 'And with the fleet will we ride,'
> ah! but there 'll be fleet steeds that *follow*."

Passing the numerous plays upon words, except to mention the double pun at v. 7, Jehovah looked for *mishpat* and behold *mishpach*, for *tsedhakah* and behold *tse'âkah*, I mention one more instance of irony. In xxxi. 2, the politicians seek not Jehovah, because they are running this way and that after chariots and horses, after some sage worldly policy; they are impatient of anything so misty and spiritual as the guidance of Jehovah. Here Isaiah puts in his "aber," say rather his "mais," for the *mot* is thoroughly French: "Mais, messieurs, *il* aussi est sage — le Seigneur, le Dieu vivant. Il n'a point manqué d'accomplir toutes ses paroles."

At this point the transition is easy to a quality of style at the opposite pole from humor.

4. *Sublimity.*—The opening of the book has already been cited. In chapter ii. occurs the prediction of the day of Jehovah Sabaoth, introduced as follows: "Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, from before the terror of Jehovah, and from the glory of his majesty." Considering how insignificant, to the eye of sense, was the kingdom of Judah in comparison with the great world-powers, the sublimity of faith revealed at chapter viii. 9, 10 is something marvellous.

In order to quote one more passage of signal sublimity, which has been inadequately rendered by both English versions, I neglect all the rest. The metaphors in this paragraph (xxx. 27–33) succeed one another with bewildering swiftness, but alike at the beginning and the end our God is a consuming fire.

"Behold, the name of Jehovah cometh from far, his anger burneth and dense is the smoke; his lips are full of wrath, and his tongue is like devouring flame; and his breath is an overflowing torrent that reacheth even to the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of destruction; and a bridle that leadeth astray shall be in the jaws of the *peoples*.

"But for *you* shall be the song as in the night when a feast is celebrated; and gladness of heart, as when one

marcheth to the pipe on his way to the mount of Jehovah, to the Rock of Israel. And Jehovah shall cause to be heard the peal of his voice, and cause to be seen the descent of his arm, with the fury of anger and the flame of devouring fire, crashing and tempest and hail-stones. For by the voice of Jehovah shall Asshur be shattered; He shall smite him with his rod. And every stroke of the staff of doom which Jehovah layeth upon him shall be with tabrets and harps; and in battles of tumult he will fight against him. For from of old is Topheth prepared; ay, this for the king is made ready; they deepened, they broadened it; its pile hath fire and wood in abundance; like a stream of brimstone Jehovah's breath doth kindle it."

III. Isaiah's Leading Ideas.

These are presented in the introductory chapter, like the themes of a symphony, and are afterwards expanded.

1. *The Majesty of God.*—We turn once more to the first words which follow the title of the book. Well may the heavens attend and the earth give ear, for it is their Maker who speaks. The thought of the one Creator, so trite to us, was timely if not new in the eighth century, when not only in the nations around, but in Israel also, polytheism was so prevalent and so seductive.

Chapter ii., from verse 10 on, is entirely devoted to the development of this theme, the majesty of God. Chapter iii. continues the subject; the haughtiness of either sex is humbled before God. Chapter vi. is the majestic vision of Jehovah in the temple. Note further xii. 4; xviii. 3; xix. 1, 16; xxiii. 11. In that passage of sustained sublimity quoted under the previous head, it is Jehovah's voice that shatters the Assyrian. That catastrophe is the subject of chapter xxxiii.; and God is the agent (vs. 10). So in verse 5, Jehovah is exalted, for he dwelleth on high.

2. *The Sinfulness of Man.* — As before, the theme is at the beginning; it forms the very indictment that heaven and earth are summoned to witness. Israel is a rebellious ingrate, shamed by the ox and the ass. Hypocrisy as well as rebellion is charged against the people (i. 11–15). Their sacrifices and incense-offerings are a stench in the nostrils of Jehovah. Why will they spread forth in prayer the hands that are full of blood? Oppression is a third sin denounced (i. 23, 17). The poor widows and orphans stand no chance before those officials who will favor no suppliants that do not stroke them with a bribe. For further presentations of rebellion, see iii. 8; v. 24; xxx. 9; of

hypocrisy, v. 20; xxix. 13; xxxii. 7; of oppression, iii. 12, 15; v. 7, 23; x. 1, 2; xxxiii. 15.

3. *Divine Judgment.* — No marvel if this follows the first two. We meet it already in i. 6, 7; your country is desolate, your cities burned; wounds and bruises and festering sores attest the wrath of the Almighty. As it has been, so it shall be (i. 28). It is needless to multiply references on this topic; for so far as quantity goes, it is Isaiah's chief subject. Woe after woe, curse upon curse, pour forth from his lips. No other writer, not even Jeremiah, surpasses him in the variety and persistence of his denunciations of punishment.

I say then, did God cast off his people? God forbid. Isaiah crieth concerning Israel: it is the remnant that shall be saved. And, as Isaiah had said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had become as Sodom and had been like unto Gomorrah.

These quotations of Paul from our prophet introduce Isaiah's next leading idea.

4. *Salvation for a Remnant.* — The last of Paul's citations just given is from i. 9, for the introduction still furnishes the text. We meet the doctrine again in chapter iv.; them that are escaped of Israel, he that is left in Zion, and so on. At the

close of the inaugural vision (chap. vi.) the holy seed is the surviving stock, and in vii. 22 the reference is to everyone who survives the destruction from Assyria. In xi. 11 the Lord recovers the remnant of his people. See also xiv. 32; xxviii. 16; xxix. 8; xxxi. 5; xxxvii. 31. Thus in Isaiah's theology, punishment for the wicked is consistent with deliverance for the elect. Nor are these last identical with those whom the wall of Zion happens to surround. Zion herself must be purified.

5. *Refuge in God Alone.* — This too comes out clearly in chapter i. It is Jehovah Sabaoth who has left us a remnant (i. 9), and who, according to i. 25–27, will put the people through the smelting furnace, that they may become the city of righteousness. The expansion of this text is found in viii. 17–20, where men are called off from wizards that chirp and mutter to the living God. The great salvation in ix. 1–7 is wholly God's work. Compare the two psalms in chapter xii. See also xvii. 7–11; xxix. 22–24; xxxii. 15–17. The sinful nation has become in its kernel a redeemed Israel; the doctrine of refuge in God has become the doctrine of divine forgiveness, already outlined at i. 18, where scarlet and crimson sins are made like snow and like wool.

Isaiah's leading ideas begin with God's majesty and end with His forgiving love. Only a perverse mind could imagine these two thoughts to stand apart in hostility. Isaiah teaches, on the contrary, that they are symmetrical halves of the circle which eternally completes itself; this he teaches in so many words in xxx. 18: — "and therefore will Jehovah wait that he may be gracious unto you, *and therefore will he be exalted that he may* have mercy upon you; for a God of judgment is Jehovah; blessed are all they that wait for him."

JEREMIAH THE PROPHET.

XI.

JEREMIAH THE PROPHET.

By Prof. MAX KELLNER, D.D.,
Cambridge Theological School.

IN the history of religion no phenomenon appears more frequently and is more striking than the fact that an idea which is a living truth of religion in one age often becomes in later ages a lifeless formula and an enemy of true faith. The defensive bulwark of one age becomes in its ruin a mere obstruction to the march of progress. Such was the history of the doctrine of the inviolability of Jerusalem. In the eighth century Isaiah's conviction had enabled him to say to his king that in Mount Zion God had His earthly habitation; even the mighty world-empire of Assyria would be dashed in pieces if it presumed to attack His holy dwelling-place. The provisions and promises of the newly published Deuteronomic Code (621 B. C.) through the consequent centralization of the worship at Jerusalem, served to emphasize still more this belief that Jerusalem was in a peculiar

way God's dwelling-place among men. But in the sequel the teaching of the prophet reached the thoroughly unprophetic conclusion that, do what Judah might, Jehovah must stand by His own territory and save His own peculiar people. It was a fatal assumption, both morally and politically. In the moral life of the people it resulted in personal indifference and formalism; in their political life, in national arrogance and defeat.

The political position assumed, be it by Isaiah or by Jeremiah, is always due to the conditions of the age in which the prophet's lot is cast. Between the anxious days of 701 B.C., when Isaiah walked the streets of siege-bound Jerusalem, and the year 626 B.C., when Jeremiah received his call, there had come a great change over the face of the political world. Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian had already proven himself an enemy more to be feared than Sennacherib the Assyrian had ever been; and Jeremiah announces that only in submission to the new world-power may Judah hope for continued national existence. Whereas Isaiah had been called to be the prophet of national independence, Jeremiah's vocation was to be the prophet of national subjection.

As for Judah's moral condition, the measure

of her iniquities is wellnigh full. Jerusalem is like Sodom of old, and Jeremiah threatens city and land with destruction. Jehovah's protection is now to be withdrawn from them; through their backsliding His love has given way to His righteous wrath. Judah is to learn in the hard school of suffering that the Most High dwells not in temples made with hands; it is not stately shrines or punctilious observance of the proper ritual that He demands, but loving-kindness, and justice, and purity of life. God "tries the heart and reins."

This development of the religious thought was specifically new with Jeremiah, and contemporary events explain its appearance at this particular time. Deuteronomy had been misread. Its external demands had been emphasized almost exclusively, and this had resulted in that false confidence in the Torah and the Temple which expressed itself in the popular religion of ceremonialism and superstition. Jeremiah announced that all these, country and city and Temple, all were to pass away, and preached the doctrine of a personal religion, resting on a spiritual basis and independent of all such extraneous elements.

Jeremiah's message made him to be hated of all men. Prophets, priests, and people looked with

abhorrence upon the man who could speak thus of his country and its holy city. Yet among them all, there was no more loyal and patriotic heart than that of Jeremiah. But his very love of country made his message harder to utter, and added a peculiar heartache to the bitterness of the unjust taunts with which it was received. When Jerusalem was invested, Isaiah could cheer on his fellow-countrymen to resist, but not he. Like Phocion of Athens, he had to preach national submission, only to have his words discredited and to go down with his nation into its grave. No other one of the prophets had such a task, — "to go always downward but never upward, to pass from gloom into thicker darkness, to see each national shame merged in a deeper, to see defeat added to defeat, but never a victory, to see calamity fall on calamity, yet the people never wiser or more penitent."

That Jeremiah kept his unswerving devotion to the will of God, his dauntless courage in rebuking vice, and his supreme faith in God's plans for Israel to the end shows how truly strong and noble his nature must have been. Yet when his call came to him as a youth in 626 B. C., he quailed (chapter i.). Surely the commission was

one by which the boldest heart might easily have been daunted, for it was "to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow," only ultimately and very remotely "to build and to plant."

The opening years, however, of Jeremiah's ministry while Josiah was on the throne of Jerusalem, were not without promise. Politically Judah could for the time rejoice, for the power of Assyria, whose yoke had for years rested upon her shoulders, was on the wane. Religiously also the outlook seemed more hopeful than it had been at any time since Hezekiah's day. The young king had inaugurated a reformation to extirpate the widespread idolatry and injustice and corruption which had characterized Manasseh's reign. To this movement Jeremiah gave a whole-hearted support, as we see from xi. 1–8 and xvii. 19–27. His utterances in ii.–vi. also evidently belong to this period; though some of them were probably modified materially in the light of later events, when the prophet put them into written form in King Jehoiakim's reign. The preaching of this first period of Jeremiah's ministry was hopeful: it was some years yet before the prophet was to find out that the sin of Judah had become so ingrained as to leave almost no hope of amendment.

In 609 B. C. Nahum's prophecy was on the eve of fulfilment. Nineveh's walls were encompassed by the besieging hosts of confederated Medians and Babylonians. The Assyrian lioness was doomed, and the birds of prey were hastening to the carcass. In the west, Pharaoh Necho thought the moment opportune, and invaded Assyria's vassal states in Palestine, intending to extend his empire once more to the banks of the Euphrates. King Josiah, with the assurances of Deuteronomy still in his ears, and flushed with enthusiasm for his people, whose rights he thought he was defending, tried to bar his way. The outcome was most disastrous. On the battle-field of Megiddo, God-fearing Josiah fell, and with him perished the last hopes of Judah's reformation and continued national life. The promises of Deuteronomy seemed nothing but a delusion; the reformers lost courage, and soon idolatry and immorality again debauched the land.

Josiah's second son, Jehoahaz (Shallum) was placed on the throne (609), to reign only three months. Necho carried him off to Egypt (xxi. 11–xxii. 12), and substituted Josiah's eldest son, Jehoiakim (Eliakim) (608), and Judah thus became a dependency of Egypt.

No sooner was Jehoiakim on the throne than Jeremiah's real work began; he had to denounce, to contend against, and to struggle in every way to frustrate the whole policy of the new king, in whom Manasseh seemed to live again (vii.–x. except x. 1–16; xxvi.). Jehoiakim's fourth year, 604, made memorable by the battle of Carchemish, was the turning-point of the age. On the ruins of the Assyrian empire the kings of Babylon and Egypt met and looked each other in the face. Necho's army was utterly routed, and the Babylonians marched unopposed through Syria as far as the confines of Egypt. By the year 601 Nebuchadnezzar had become over-lord of all Palestine, and Jehoiakim had ceased to be an Egyptian vassal, and had become perforce a vassal of Babylon. Jeremiah at once perceived the political trend of all this, and in the triumphal ode of chapter xlvi. he hails Nebuchadnezzar as the new world-conqueror, and declares that his rule is destined to embrace practically the then known world (xxv.; xlvi.–xlix. 33). As for Judah, he boldly asserts that her only hope now lies in yielding to the inevitable, and bending her neck to the yoke of Babylon.

In the king's fifth year Baruch had written at

Jeremiah's mouth a record of the past twenty-three years of his master's ministry, — "all the words" which Jehovah had spoken to him "against Israel and against Judah and against all the nations," from the days of Josiah onwards (ii.–vi.). It seems that the prophet's distasteful doctrines had already aroused active opposition. "I am shut up," he says, "and cannot go into the house of Jehovah." Baruch therefore is sent to read the roll with its prophetic warnings in the Temple-court; and thus its existence is brought to the attention of the king. The events so graphically depicted in chapter xxxvi. are put by the preferred Septuagint text in the year 601. Only three or four columns of the roll had been read, before the king in a passion snatched the parchment, and, slashing it in pieces, tossed it into the burning brazier, and ordered the arrest of Jeremiah and Baruch. They had fled already into hiding, or they, too, might have been sacrificed to his fury. They were fortunate, as the prophet assures his downhearted scribe, to have escaped with their lives (xlv.). In their enforced seclusion they rewrite the roll with many fresh additions.

After Nebuchadnezzar's departure to his own country, Jehoiakim rendered his tribute for three

years (601–598); but at the end of that time, despite Jeremiah's warnings, he broke faith with his suzerain. To punish him, Nebuchadnezzar, not being at leisure to come in person, ordered his vassals of the provinces bordering on Judah, the Syrians, the Moabites, and the Ammonites, who had refused to join Jehoiakim in his revolt, to co-operate with his own soldiery stationed on the frontier, and to lay his country waste (xii. 7–17). It was in some attempt to check these depredations that Jehoiakim was himself slain without the city-walls and his body left "with the burial of an ass" (xxii. 13–19).

The invasion of the country drove many of the inhabitants to seek refuge within the walls of Jerusalem. Among others who thus came were those ascetics of the time, the nomad Rechabites. Jeremiah tempts them to disobey their father's injunction by drinking wine, in order to bring their unswerving loyalty to their father's precept into sharp contrast with his countrymen's flagrant disloyalty to their covenant with Jehovah (xxxv.).

To about this period must be referred also Jeremiah's striking sermon on the conditional nature of prophecy, which he illustrated in concrete form by the symbols of the moulding and

remoulding of the potter's clay, and by the solemn breaking of an earthen vessel in the valley of Hinnom (xviii.–xix.). Whereas in this section (xviii.–xx.) the fate of Judah is represented as still undecided and as depending on the people's choice, in the prophet's sermons which follow it chronologically (xi. 9–17; xiv. 1–xvii. 18) it is fixed irrevocably: the nation has reached a point at which amendment is no longer possible, and Jeremiah is to intercede for them no more. "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people; cast them out of my sight and let them go forth." Words of menace, which with many others (xiii.; xxii. 20–30) were fulfilled only three months later, when Nebuchadnezzar appeared in Palestine in person (597), and Jehoiakim's successor, Jehoiachin (Jeconiah) surrendered unconditionally, and with his mother and all the best and worthiest of his people and the sacred vessels of the Temple, was carried off to Babylon.

The last king of Judah was Zedekiah (Mattaniah) the youngest son of Josiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar placed on the tottering throne, under a solemn oath of allegiance and fidelity (596). Zedekiah was well-intentioned, but too weak to stand out

against the restless popular leaders who were eager for an alliance with Egypt, and a combined attempt on the part of the west to shake off the yoke of Babylon. In vain Jeremiah declared that Nebuchadnezzar was only carrying out the divine purpose, that he was the servant of Jehovah, his vicegerent, the agent chosen for executing punishment upon the nations for their sins. All these nations were to "serve Nebuchadnezzar and his son, and his son's son, until the time of his own land came." Until that day of Babylon's own punishment should set them free, Jeremiah exhorts those who had been deported with Jehoiachin to settle down quietly in Babylonia, to plant gardens and build houses and marry wives and "seek the peace of Babylon" during their sojourn of seventy years. He assures them that in them the future of Israel is bound up; they are God's true Israel, the inheritors of the promise, and not Zedekiah and those with him in Jerusalem (xxiv.). As for the latter, Jeremiah compared them to a basket of "very bad figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad;" and predicted that they were shortly to be consumed from off the land.

That day of doom now advanced apace. Early in Zedekiah's reign we find ambassadors at Je-

rusalem from Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon, who had met to form a league with Zedekiah against the common enemy (xxvii.). Nor were prophets wanting who would endorse such a step as a religious duty (xxviii.–xxix.; xxiii. 9–40). Jeremiah constantly found opposed to him those prophets of smooth things, who, with their argument that Isaiah had asserted that Jehovah's dwelling-place could not be violated and subsequent events had proved it, never ceased to assure the people of divine protection, and to incite them to revolt from the detested yoke of Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar heard of what was being plotted in Palestine, and summoned Zedekiah into his presence to renew his oath of allegiance (cf. li. 59); yet no sooner had Pharaoh Hophra (Apries) come to the throne than Zedekiah believed in the old delusion of Egyptian aid, and entered into an alliance with him. In xxi. 1–10 and xxxiv. 1–7, Nebuchadnezzar is portrayed as in the country and as investing Jerusalem (587). The Egyptians for once kept their promise, and Nebuchadnezzar was forced to raise the siege and advance to meet them.

At this new confirmation of the Isaian teaching the popular joy knew no bounds: Nebuchadnezzar

had gone forever. But in the midst of their rejoicing the hated prophet stands up once more to arraign them, and his theme is a despicable breach of faith (xxxiv. 8–22); moreover, it is no time for merry-making, for Nebuchadnezzar will surely return (xxxvii. 1–10). Under stress of the siege, in order to increase the fighting force, a large number of Hebrew slaves had been given their freedom. Now, upon the withdrawal of Nebuchadnezzar's army, they had been forced into slavery again. Jeremiah's scathing denunciation of this base act served only to further exasperate his already venomous enemies. As he is on the point of setting out on a trip to his native town of Anathoth, they cause his arrest on the charge of deserting to the Babylonians (had he himself not said, "He that goeth out and falleth away to the Babylonians, he shall live"?), and he is beaten and thrown into prison (xxxvii. 11–xxxviii.). Misunderstood and mistrusted, belied and persecuted as a traitor to his country, no wonder he cried out in the bitterness of his lonely soul and cursed the day of his birth, which, so far as he could see, had brought him into the world only for hatred and persecution and misery.

But the word of Jehovah's prophet was soon to

be vindicated in Nebuchadnezzar's return. After eighteen months of siege and famine, the city was taken (586). Zedekiah was captured in the act of flight and, carried before his outraged suzerain at Riblah, was shown no mercy. His sons first were slain in his sight, and then, according to a brutal custom of the time, his eyes were put out, and, blind and weighed down with fetters, he was sent a prisoner to Babylon (xxxix.; [lii.]).

In Jerusalem's darkest days Jeremiah never wavered in his belief in the indestructibility of Israel as a nation (xxx.–xxxiii.). And not only should the nation live again, but it should be amid the scenes of their own beloved country (xxiii. 1–8). Even when the city is encompassed by the Babylonian hosts, he preaches that "houses and lands and vineyards shall be possessed again in the land;" and in token of his firm faith he sends from his prison to redeem a field at Anathoth, on which at the time Nebuchadnezzar's army probably lay encamped; just as the citizens of Rome, when Hannibal was at their gates, bought and sold the very land on which the Carthaginian had pitched his tent (Livy, xxvi. 11).

Jeremiah has been described as the prophet of lamentation and mourning and woe; as one "the

wings of whose imagination never fully learned to expand, for they were pressed down by the leaden weight of calamity." Yet in his hope for the future Jeremiah soars almost highest among the prophets. His thought of Israel was as Israel existed in the original purpose of God. He looked back across the centuries of disloyalty to Mount Sinai and the holy covenant there made between Jehovah and His people. Alas, Israel had not been true, and so that covenant in the fall of the nation was now dissolved. But the purpose of the old covenant was to be more fully met by a new one; for Israel was still Jehovah's people, and He their God. Under this new covenant His law was to be written, not on tables of stone, but on their hearts, and circumcision was to be of the heart. All externals would become non-essentials, for the knowledge of God would be inborn in man, and the individual soul could draw near, without mediation, to its God.

In this hope of the future the prophet included more than his own people. If the knowledge of God is born in man, then under the new covenant there can be no differences between Israel and her neighbors; and he sees all nations coming up at last to Jerusalem "to the name of Jehovah" (iii.

17). From the utmost parts he sees them crowding to the Holy City, now ready to cast away their idols and confess that Jehovah alone is God. "O Lord, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth and shall say, Our fathers have inherited only lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit" (xvi. 19). In those glorious days of the future they shall no longer mislead Israel to worship idol-gods, but shall themselves be led by converted Israel to worship Jehovah, and thus shall they too become inheritors of the kingdom of God.

As time rolled on and the destruction of Jerusalem proved that God had indeed spoken through the mouth of this His prophet, Jeremiah's promise of a restoration after seventy years became a source of comfort and hope to the exiles; and gradually a change passed over their thought of the prophet. In life he had been branded by Jerusalemites and exiles alike as a coward and a traitor to his country; now he became the object of their deepest regard. It was not many centuries before various legends of a more or less romantic character had become attached to him. In 2 Macc. ii. 1–7 we read that when the Holy City was burned, he hid "the tabernacle, and ark and the altar of incense

in a cave;" and in 2 Macc. xv. 12–16, that it was he, "a man with gray hairs and exceeding glorious, of a wonderful and excellent majesty," who gave Judas Maccabæus the sword of gold with which he fought and prevailed. Even in our Lord's time, Jewish tradition held that his work was not yet done; that he might return to restore the Temple and kingdom to their ancient grandeur (Matt. xvi. 14; cf. John i. 21).

Far different in real life were the actual fortunes of the prophet. To the last his fate was that of the Trojan prophetess, to speak words of terrible warning to have them only disbelieved. Having the choice given him, on the sacking of Jerusalem, either to go to Babylon and live there in honorable captivity, or to stay with the remnant, he chooses the life of hardship. Within two months the new governor Gedaliah is assassinated, and the panic-stricken people are preparing to flee from Nebuchadnezzar's vengeance (xl.–xli.). Once more Jeremiah's counsel is spurned, and he is dragged away to Tahpanhes in Egypt (xlii.–xliv.). The Bible has no notice of his death; but if an old tradition recorded by Tertullian (adv. Gnost. c. 8) and Jerome (adv. Jov. ii. 37) may be accepted, he was stoned to death there at Tahpanhes by the

angry people, who were impatient of his denunciations of their idolatrous devotion to "the queen of heaven." There would be a certain fitness in such a climax to his troublous days. But be that as it may, we must believe that his martyr life, so full of loneliness and ingratitude, of scorn and persecution, won for him the martyr's crown.

EZEKIEL AND HIS TIMES.

XII.

EZEKIEL AND HIS TIMES.

By Prof. SAMUEL IVES CURTISS, D.D.
Of Chicago Theological Seminary.

I. The Time.

THE ministry of Ezekiel fell at a transition in Israel's history. In his own person he also marked the transition from prophet to priest, in his teaching from prophecy to legislation. From this point of view he is one of the most important characters among the Old Testament prophets, for he is clearly the bridge between prophetism and Judaism.[1]

The northern kingdom had been favored by the ministry of such great prophets as Amos and Hosea, the southern by Isaiah and Jeremiah. Clearly apprehending the eternal principles of righteousness and discerning the signs of the

[1] Arndt, Die Stellung Ezechiels in der alttestamentlichen Prophetie, Berlin, 1895, pp. 27, 28, goes so far as to affirm: "Ezekiel is not a prophet. . . . According to Jeremiah's evangelical hope, a prophet is no longer necessary in the new

times, they had condemned the moral, political, and religious characteristics of the ruling classes of the people: their oppressions, their foreign alliances, and their engrafting of foreign forms of worship upon the service of Israel's God. With eyes divinely opened, they had seen the inevitable results of the course on which the rulers and the majority of the people were bent. These results they faithfully set before the people in their discourses, which have been handed down greatly abridged. As the prophets of the northern kingdom had foretold,[1] Samaria had fallen, and the same sins which had wrought her overthrow were hurrying Judah on to her doom. But there were considerations in connection with the southern kingdom which led a numerous class of prophets[2] and their followers, who were antagonistic to the true prophets, to claim that Jerusalem could never

covenant, because Jehovah 'will put his law in their inward parts, and in their heart he will write it.' According to Ezekiel a prophet is no longer necessary, but the priest who teaches the people the nice difference between clean and unclean. Hence Jeremiah is the last prophet, but Ezekiel the first scribe, 'the spiritual father of Judaism.'" This statement, however, overlooks the work of such a later prophet as second Isaiah.

[1] Cf. Amos iii. 11; vi. 14; ix. 8; Hosea ix. 3; x. 6; xi. 5; xiii. 16, with 2 Kings xvii. 13–23.

[2] The false prophets were four hundred to one in the time of Ahab, 1 Kings xxii. 6–28.

be destroyed.[1] From the standpoint of the majority of the people the large body of prophets was right, and men like Jeremiah and Ezekiel were wrong.

We imagine that their mode of reasoning was something as follows: "The fact that Samaria fell before the victorious Assyrian is no proof that Jerusalem will fall before the conquering Babylonian. Jehovah did not permit the Assyrian king to overcome Jerusalem.[2] The northern kingdom was overcome, because it had forsaken the Temple, the legitimate priesthood, and the House of David; but it is inconceivable that Jehovah should allow His city to be captured and His Temple to be overthrown.[3] Since Judah is His country, Jerusalem His city, and the Temple His sacred seat, to do so would be to be vanquished by the gods of the heathen and to be driven as an exile from His own land."[4] Hence the answer of

[1] Jer. v. 10–12; xiv. 13–16; xxiii. 14–17; xxviii.

[2] Is. xxxvii. 33, 34.

[3] Cf. Is. xxxvii. 35.

[4] Canaan is mentioned frequently as Jehovah's land: Hosea ix. 3; Jer. xvi. 18; Ezek. xxxvi. 5; Joel i. 6. The statement is nowhere made that Jehovah would be an exile if His land were conquered, but it naturally follows from such conceptions as those assigned to Naomi (Ruth i. 15) and David (1 Sam. xxvi. 19, last clause). The reference in Ezek. viii. 12 does not prove the contrary; see Davidson's Ezekiel, Cambridge, 1893, on this passage.

these prophets and of their followers to all the threatenings of Jeremiah was, "The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord."[1] As Jehovah's residence they maintained that they possessed the divine pledge that neither Jerusalem nor Judah could be overthrown.[2] Such reasoning rested on the persuasion of the ancient Semitic world that each country had its own deity,[3] — a persuasion from which the mass of the Judeans in the time of Jeremiah were not free. They had not arrived at those clear conceptions of monotheism which were held by the true prophets. Hence the fall of Jerusalem was necessary that the people might rise from monolatry to monotheism, from the God of the country to the God of all the earth. The assurance, then, that Jerusalem and the Temple could never fall was based on the belief that the God of Israel must have a country and a home.

II. The Man.

Although we cannot definitely determine when Ezekiel was born, yet, from various indications,

[1] Jer. vii. 4.

[2] Micah iii. 10, 11.

[3] Cf. Smith, The Religion of the Semites, New York, 1889, pp. 91 ff.

we may well believe that he was over thirty when he was carried into captivity,[1] hence he may have been about ten years of age when the Book of Deuteronomy[2] was discovered in the year 621 B. C., and he was a younger contemporary of Jeremiah,[3] whose style reflects that book[4] as com-

[1] Diestel in Riehm's Handwörterbuch des Biblischen Altertums, Leipzig, 1884, vol. I., p. 606, says of his deportation 598 B. C., "It is improbable that this deportation came to him at a youthful age: his exact knowledge of the sanctuary in every part, his ripened priestly spirit, the interpenetration of his language with ritualistic expressions and representations which are found in him in a far higher degree than in all the other prophets, finally, his term of service, which was not very long. . . . All this makes it probable that he had been active for a series of years in the Temple, and was probably first carried away in the midst of the thirties [i. e., when he was about thirty-five]."

[2] The reason for maintaining that substantially our Book of Deuteronomy and not the entire Pentateuch was brought to light at this time is in the nature of the reforms introduced in the reign of king Josiah, which corresponds with the demands made in Deuteronomy.

[3] Plumptre, The Expositor, London, 1884, p. 5, estimates that in 610 B. C. Ezekiel was fifteen and that Jeremiah was about 38–43. Skinner, The Book of Ezekiel, New York, 1895, pp. 13 ff. says, "Their ministries were contemporaneous for five years. . . . We may safely assume that amongst the treasures which he took with him into exile was the roll written by Baruch to the dictation of Jeremiah. . . . But . . . there remains an affinity of a much deeper kind between the teaching of the two prophets, which can only be explained . . . by the personal influence of the older upon the younger . . . [this] influence extends not only to the form but also to the substance of his teaching, and can therefore only be explained by early impressions received by the younger prophet in the days before the word of the Lord came to him."

[4] On the basis of this resemblance Colenso maintained that

pletely as that of Ezekiel reflects the Law of Holiness (Lev. xvii.–xxvi.).[1] His infancy, youth, and early manhood fell in one of the most important periods of ancient history, when the terror of the Scythian hordes in their resistless career, carrying dismay to every heart, had not been forgotten,[2] when the mighty Assyrian Empire, which had suffered at the hands of the Medes, now mortally wounded through those filthy barbarians, easily succumbed to the rising power of the Babylonian arms. His heart had been chilled by the defeat of the beloved King Josiah at Megiddo before the Egyptian host (609 B. C.). He had heard the news of Nebuchadnezzar's accession to the throne of Babylonia (604 B. C.); he had seen the combination of the Syrian states against him in their futile effort to check his victorious power in the west; he had heard tidings of the advance of the Babylonian host to Tyre, and a little later had seen it with Nebuchadnezzar at its head advancing

Jeremiah was the author of Deuteronomy, as other critics (Graf and Kayser) have held that Ezekiel was the author of Lev. xvii.–xxvi., although neither view now finds favor.

[1] These chapters were first designated in this way by Klostermann with reference to their prevailing motive.

[2] Cf. Rawlinson, the Five Great Monarchies, New York, 1881, vol. ii., pp. 223–228, 385–396; Mürdter, Geschichte Babyloniens und Assyriens, 1891, pp. 230–233.

to the gates of Jerusalem. He may have experienced the privations of the siege, and certainly thrilled with horror, as he learned that the sacred vessels of the Temple had fallen into the hands of the Babylonians. Imagination cannot well picture his feelings at this time, when with young King Jehoiachin and 10,023 of the flower of Israel, after a journey lasting several months, he was transported with his beloved wife, "the desire of his eyes,"[1] to Babylonia (598 B. C.). He was also destined twelve years later to hear of the final subjugation of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar,[2] although this event, which he had often foretold, was no surprise to him.

It is evident that he was ardently devoted to the royal house, as appears from his beautiful elegy on the two unfortunate kings Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin, whom he likens to two young lions.[3]

It is a justifiable conclusion that he belonged to the priestly house of Zadok,[4] and that, as has been remarked, he had served in the priest's office. It is certain from his writings, as well as from the demands made on the priesthood, that he

1 Ezek. xxiv. 16.
2 Ezek. xxxiii. 21.
3 Ezek. xix. 1–9; cf. 2 Kings xxiii. 31–33; Jer. xxiv. 1.
4 Ezek. xliv. 15, 16.

was deeply versed in all its laws and usages, that he knew the prophetic and priestly Scriptures of that period,[1] and all the legal traditions which were associated with the name of Moses.

On reaching Babylonia the exiles established homes, and were permitted to have their own social and communal arrangements, so far as they did not interfere with the Babylonian government. Ezekiel had his own house, in Tel Abib on the Chebar, where the elders visited him from time to time.[2] While other prophets had been statesmen he was more of a student; while others delivered their messages in public and before comparatively large audiences, Ezekiel more often spoke to the select few in his own home.[3] It is true that he was compelled to take this step.[4] The people could not endure his message, although some still went to hear him as they would go to hear beautiful music.[5] For at least six years the sweet lute

[1] See Smend, Der Prophet Ezechiel, Leipzig, 1880, pp. xxiv., xxv.

[2] Ezek. viii. 1; xiv. 1; xx. 1; xxxiii. 30, 31.

[3] Diestel, Op. cit., p. 606, says the larger number of his penitential discourses show clearly that he sought out assemblies of the people and that he spoke to them.

[4] Cf. Ezek. iii 25–27, xxiv. 27; xxxiii. 21, 22, 33; Klostermann, Stud. und Krit., Gotha, 1877, pp. 404, 405, maintains that Ezekiel was dumb three years.

[5] Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32.

was silent, until all his preaching and all his threatenings were confirmed by the fall of Jerusalem, and he stood revealed as a true prophet.[1]

With a good knowledge of men and public affairs, he was much of a recluse and a dreamer, a John Bunyan, who wrote a Pilgrim's Progress adapted to his time, whose allegories, visions, and descriptions are as ideal as those of the English dreamer. His new Jerusalem is not to be taken more literally than the celestial city of the Bedford tinker. Nor are we to be misled by the exact architectural measurements of the proposed temple. These are more detailed than the measurements of the New Jerusalem in Revelation,[2] but are of the same sort as the details of the glorious chariot with its wheels full of eyes, and of the symbolical siege of Jerusalem,[3] and other acts which the majority of the most conservative commentators do not understand literally.[4]

[1] Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32.

[2] Rev. xxi. 16, 17.

[3] Ezek. iv. 1–8.

[4] Delitzsch, in the Zeitschrift für die gesammte lutherische Theologie und Kirche, Leipzig, 1869, p. 607, rejects the idea that Ezekiel xl.–xlviii. can now be fulfilled, although he thinks it might have been. He says it was conditioned on the repentance of all Israel. As this did not occur, it has failed of fulfilment and cannot be fulfilled in the present stage of Christianity. Klostermann, however, Stud. und Krit. 1877, pp. 420–422, does not un-

III. The Book.

But Ezekiel's Book served the purpose for which it was designed. Judged by the course of Jewish history, as delineated by the modern critics, it was as epoch-making as Uncle Tom's Cabin. On the human side it expressed and gave form to the tendency to Judaism,[1] and the Priests' Code, which were necessary steps in the preparation for Christianity. Not that it led to the invention of new laws, but rather to a resetting, a restatement, a reclassification, and probably, in some instances, to a development of laws and usages handed down by writing and tradition as Mosaic. This view solves the mystery regarding the various deviations of the Code of Ezekiel[2] from the statutes of the Mosaic law. These deviations, from a traditional standpoint, were so serious that, according to the Talmud, the book was in danger of being relegated to the Apocrypha. They were not obliterated until Hananiah, "a contemporary of

derstand the acts alluded to symbolically, but thinks that Ezekiel lay on his side in making siege against Jerusalem because he was paralyzed.

[1] Kuenen, Mod. Rev. London, 1884, p. 639, calls him "The father of Judaism."

[2] Ezek. xl.–xlviii.

Gamaliel I., the teacher of the apostle Paul," harmonized them with the laws of Moses by the expenditure of much midnight oil.[1]

Ezekiel's legal system, then, is rather to be considered as an ideal which was never intended to be wrought out literally, but which may be regarded as the forerunner of the legal system, as edited and published in the Priests' Code in the time of Ezra (444 B. C.).

His book covers at least twenty-two years of prophetic ministry (594–572 B. C.), and like the books of the other prophets was, in part, spoken before it was written. No better example could be furnished than the Book of Ezekiel of the human side of Scripture: of the influence which time, place, and personality had in the production of the Old Testament prophecies. Ezekiel, as well as Isaiah, had a vision of his call to be a prophet, but how different! Isaiah's vision[2] is one of simplicity and incomparable majesty. The picture is drawn with a few master strokes; much

[1] See Wildeboer, The Origin of the Old Testament, London, 1895, p. 68: "This Hananiah prevented the book of Ezekiel from being withdrawn, 'because its words conflicted with those of the Torah. What then did he do? They brought him 300 jars of oil, and he explained it (or them, viz., the contradictions).'" Quoted from Shabbath fol. 13 b. and Hagiga fol. 13 a.

[2] Is. vi.

is left to the imagination. He attempts no description of the seraphim, of the throne on which the Lord of Glory is seated, or of his train which fills the Temple. Ezekiel's vision is grand,[1] but the unity of the impression is lost in the multitude of details about the divine chariot, with its wheels full of eyes at right angles to each other, and the four living creatures with four faces, etc. We are reminded at every point of the detailed descriptions of the priestly writers, whether in the account of creation, or of the tabernacle, or in the narratives of the Chronicler. It is simply an itemized description of the Divine Glory.

This vision comes from the north. The modern critics hold that this is favorable to the view that on account of the sins of Jerusalem God had withdrawn from His city and His temple to the seat of the gods in the north, from which Ezekiel conceives Him as coming to make a revelation of Himself. However this may be, the language admits of another explanation.[2] At the same time the possession of divine inspiration does not

[1] Ezek. i.

[2] Müller in his Ezechiel-Studien, Berlin, 1895, p. 15, claims that Ezekiel conceives of the Divine Glory as taking the usual route from Babylon to Palestine, instead of that of the compass, which would be south-east.

always insure the clearing away of every erroneous conception,[1] any more than it insures the full revelation of truth in every dispensation. We see a gradual unfolding in the Old Testament of truths which are not revealed in their fulness until we reach the New. So while Ezekiel might be fully on the basis of monotheism, he could have conceptions of God that border on monolatry.

This book may be divided into two parts: Jerusalem Lost (i.–xxiv.), and Jerusalem Regained (xxv.–xlviii.). The Jews remaining in Palestine under a vassal king, Zedekiah, and those in captivity in Babylon, were substantially a unit in the view, as we have seen, that Jerusalem could not be taken. Those who remained in the land, after the noblest of the people had been transported to Babylon, even claimed that it was on account of some superior goodness, that they were permitted to retain their native seats, while the exiles had been driven away because of their sins.[2] It is, then, the work of Ezekiel to expose these and

[1] One example must suffice, viz., the Old Testament conceptions regarding the condition of the dead in Sheol, as maintaining a shadowy existence (Job iii. 11–19; x. 21, 22; Is. xiv. 9, 10, R. V., margin; xxxviii. 18; Ezek. xxxii. 18–31). Cf. Jeremias, Die Babylonisch-Assyrischen Vorstellung vom Leben nach dem Tode, Leipzig, 1887, pp. 109–116.

[2] Ezek. xi. 15.

other errors, and to show that Jerusalem must surely fall.

First of all, he lays claim to divine authority. It is the glorious God who repeatedly appears to him, as in the beginning on the banks of the Chebar,[1] before whom he falls prostrate, who gives him the book of prophecy to eat, which is so bitter at first, because it proclaims Jerusalem lost, but is afterwards sweet to his taste, because it proclaims Jerusalem regained.[2] It is not, then, his own words which he speaks, or the visions of his own fancy that he describes, but those which God has revealed to him and has put in his mouth. He is but a "son of man," as he depreciatingly designates himself in the presence of the Lord of Hosts.[3] As a watchman set on the walls of Zion, he is under the most solemn obligations to utter the message given him, however unpopular it may be, if he would have his skirts free from blood, whether the people will hear or whether they will forbear.[4]

[1] Ezek. i. 4–28; iii. 23; viii. 4; x.; xi. 22, 23.

[2] Ezek. ii. 9–iii. 3.

[3] Diestel, Op. cit. p. 607, says that the formula "Son of Man" recurs more than 120 times in Ezekiel and is an idiom found nowhere else; and Kuenen, Mod. Rev., 1884, p. 635, remarks that it is equivalent to "weak mortal," while "Yahweh is, above all else, the infinitely exalted, the unapproachably glorious one."

[4] Ezek. iii. 17–21; xxxiii. 6.

In symbolical acts he is to represent the certainty of Jerusalem's overthrow and the captivity of the people.[1] Sentence is repeatedly announced, including the details of its execution, interspersed with warnings and relieved by promises, and then the specifications on which this sentence is based. In spirit he is transported to Jerusalem. He is made a witness of all the abominations that are practised in the Temple. There he sees the image of jealousy; he sees seventy men of the elders adoring every abominable thing; he sees the women weeping for Tammuz, the Babylonian Adonis; he sees twenty-five men with their backs to the Temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east, worshipping the sun.[2] The people need not claim that such a temple and such a city are essential to God, and that He will not destroy them. But this wickedness is not something new. Israel by heredity was inclined to estrangement from God. Her father was an Amorite, her mother a Hittite. A poor foundling, she had been thrown away to die and was weltering in her own blood. Jehovah came along, nourished her until she became of marriageable

[1] Ezek. iv., v., xii. 3–20.
[2] Ezek. viii.

age, clothed her and made her His wife. Then her heathenish propensities appeared. She cast lustful glances on the surrounding peoples, by seeking foreign alliances, and adopting foreign forms of worship. Differing from a common harlot, she bribed the Egyptian and the Assyrian to come to her. He therefore utters terrible threatenings, and mentions her sister Samaria in the same condemnation; but in the last verses, as in Hosea, promises to remember his early marriage covenant with her.[1] Later on, Ezekiel develops the same idea in his account of Ohola and Oholibah,[2] with a realism which shocks modern taste,[3] although well adapted to exhibit to the men of his time the loathing and detestation in which God held their apostasy from him. The symbolism involves the idea that Jehovah had two wives, Ohola, or Samaria, and Oholibah, or Judah, who both proved unfaithful to him, and who must both incur the same punishment. Of course the form of the symbolism must not be pressed. It is only

[1] Ezek. xvi.

[2] Ohola signifies "tent," Oholibah, "tent in her." See Ezek. xxiii.

[3] Decency is a somewhat relative term, as can be seen from Chaucer and Shakespeare. The broadest passage in Ezekiel is far less objectionable than some things in Chaucer.

the lesson which the prophet seeks to leave with the people, that both Israel and Judah are equally guilty, which concerns us.

While Ezekiel, as has been remarked, prepares the way for a transition to Judaism, he is at the same time a medium for a larger view of God, as not merely confined to Palestine,[1] as well as for a juster view of man. In the old history and teaching man had suffered in the mass. Punishment was meted out not only to a man, but also to a family,[2] a kingdom was punished for the errors of a king.[3] While the view of the solidarity of a family and of a nation is not to be lost sight of, the other side of the shield, as seen in the doctrine of individuality which Ezekiel sets forth, is a most important one. The children's teeth are not set on edge. The generation which the prophet is addressing may turn from their evil ways and live; not only so, each person need not be involved in the guilt of his neighbor. The person that sins shall die. The sins of another cannot add to his doom, the righteousness of an-

[1] This of course is meant with reference to the view of the entire people. Nothing but the exile could raise the mass of the people from monolatry to monotheism.

[2] Num. xvi. 27–32; Josh. vii. 24, 25.

[3] 2 Sam. xxiv. 1–17.

other cannot save him.[1] The clear statement of this doctrine, at this time, was of exceeding importance, for the Jews were likely to conclude that the exile was wholly due to the sins of their ancestors,[2] and, therefore, to neglect repentance and despair of restoration. Hence Ezekiel was instrumental in emphasizing the doctrine of man's personal responsibility to God.[3]

As Jeremiah was sent not only to break down, but also to build and to plant,[4] so Ezekiel had the same mission. For him the old Jerusalem, which is to be destroyed, is to be rebuilt in greater splendor. But before this millennial day can dawn upon united Israel, before the vast army of dry bones of Israel can experience a national resurrection, the enemies of Israel must be vanquished from the earth.[5] He has not those large views of the universality of Israel's religion for the nations which were vouchsafed to First[6] and Second Isaiah.[7] He is in this respect not advanced be-

[1] Ezek. xviii. 1–20.

[2] 2 Kings xxi. 10–15; xxiii. 26, 27; xxiv. 3, 4; Jer. xv. 4.

[3] Cf. Jer. xxxi. 29, 30.

[4] Jer. i. 10.

[5] Ezek. xxv.–xxxii.; xxxv.

[6] For the limits of first Isaiah see Dr. Cobb in chapter x.

[7] Without entering into a discussion of the complex character of Is. xl.–xlvi., it may be enough to refer for a popular treatment of the subject to George Adams Smith's Commentary on Isaiah, vol. ii., chapter i. Duhm, Jesia, is critical.

yond the narrowness of Judaism, which even appears among New Testament Christians.[1]

But after the judgments on the foreign nations and Israel's resurrection the greatest foe is still to be overcome before the millennial glory, as described in Ezek. xl.–xlviii., is permitted to dawn. The terrors with which the Scythians had shaken the ancient world seem to be reflected in his account of the conflict with Gog, prince of Magog.[2] Thus every foe of Israel is to perish, and the way is to be prepared for the erection of an ideal state. In this state divine worship so dominates everything else that the image of the son of David, familiar in the Messianic hopes of the older prophets, dwindles to a mere prince.[3] This, however, is unavoidable as we study the picture which Ezekiel unfolds. The Temple and the Lord of the Temple are first. It is the centre

[1] Acts xi. 1–17.

[2] Schrader, The Cuneiform Inscriptions and the O. T., vol. ii., p. 123, says this reminds us of the Assyrian form Gugu of the name of the Lydian king Gyges. Both Meyer, Geschichte des Alterthums, Stuttgart, 1884, pp. 557, 558, and Hommel, Geschichte Babyloniens und Assyriens, Berlin, 1885, p. 727, find a reference in this designation to the king of the Scythians. Meyer says Ezekiel is in error, Hommel believes him to be correct; in the same vein as the latter, cf. Ragozin, The Story of Assyria, New York, 1887, pp. 383, 384.

[3] Ezek. xliv. 3; xlv. 7; xlvi. 2; xlviii. 21, etc.

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point of the transformed territory of Israel. The regulation of its service and the establishment of its legitimate priesthood, the sons of Zadok, are matters of prime importance. Hence even the prince himself appears as subsidiary.

The last nine chapters of Ezekiel as truly form a code as the greater Book of the Covenant,[1] the lesser Book of the Covenant,[2] the Book of Deuteronomy,[3] or the Law of Holiness.[4] The other codes, according to the testimony of Israelitish history, were in vogue. There is no evidence that the Code of Ezekiel ever was in vogue, or that it was anything more than a shadow of things to come, but not an image of the things.[5] Its purpose was fulfilled in the impulse which it gave to the priestly institutions and to Judaism. It was an essential stage in the preparation for Christianity. Judged by the light of modern research and criticism, Ezekiel easily takes a commanding place among the great prophets, not so much by reason of the beauty, power, and originality of what he wrote, as by his adaptation both to express and to form the thinking of his time. He is

[1] Ex. xx.–xxiii.
[2] Ex. xxxiv.
[3] Deut. xii.–xxvi.
[4] Lev. xvii.–xxvi.
[5] Heb. x. 1.

not so much a prophet for every age as for his own age. He lacks the depth and universality of First Isaiah, and the evangelical insight, beauty, and spiritual fervor of Second Isaiah, but he is truly the slave described by Paul leading to Christ.[1] By being the forerunner of those who place the yoke of legal enactment on the necks of God's people, he paves the way for Him who comes to make men free.

His ideals of Jerusalem and the Temple were well adapted to inspire his contemporaries for the next step, hence to serve just the purpose for which God designed them; but they pass away before the clearer, more spiritual ideals given to John in the Revelation.

We should not speak of contradiction between these ideals, or of an exact fulfilment of either of them. The one does not exclude the other. They are simply descriptions of heaven in the vernacular of earth during different dispensations, and are not to be taken literally, because the human mind is unable in any age to rise to the reality and blessedness of that state which God has prepared for those who love Him.

1 Gal. iii. 24. Cf. the marginal note in The Variorum Teacher's Edition of the Holy Bible, London, 1893.

AMOS AT BETHEL.

XIII.

AMOS AT BETHEL.

By PROF. LEWIS B. PATON, M.A.
Of Hartford Theological Seminary.

ABOUT the year 760 B.C. there suddenly appeared at Bethel, the holy city of the kingdom of Israel, a man called Amos, who claimed to have received a revelation from God, and who denounced unsparingly all existing civil and religious institutions. Old Testament history has nothing to tell us concerning this prophet, but from his book we learn a few facts in regard to his life. He was not a citizen of the northern kingdom, but came from Tekoa, a little town of southern Judah, on the border-land between the farming and the grazing country. There he had cultivated the mulberry-fig and had been a *nōqēd*, or raiser of the long-wooled breed of sheep known in Arabic as *naqad*.[1] This does not indicate that he was merely a peasant-shepherd, for in 2 Ki. iii. 4, Mesha, king of Moab, is also called a *nōqēd*,

[1] Am. i. 1; vii. 14.

which our version appropriately renders, "sheep-master." He must have been a man of independent means, since, while he was preaching at Bethel, he did not depend upon the gifts of the people, as was the custom of the other prophets.

Although not an educated man in the technical sense, he was a keen observer of the processes of nature and of the thought and habits of men. He possessed a knowledge of general history which was remarkable for that age, and was acquainted also with the extant literature of his people. In intellectual ability he stands second to Isaiah only among the prophets, and in literary finish his book is one of the finest writings in the Old Testament. He was well endowed, therefore, both by nature and by training for the work to which he had devoted himself.

Still, nothing had been further from his own wish or intention than to become a prophet. He was a plain, unassuming man, who had never entered one of the communities of the "sons of the prophets" with the idea of fitting himself for this ministry.[1] He was fully conscious of the hardships which a true prophet must meet. He knew that the Israelites had always commanded such

[1] vii. 14.

men not to prophesy;[1] that they hated one who reproved in the gate, and abhorred one who spoke uprightly;[2] and that one who consulted his selfish interests would do better to keep silence in such evil times.[3] It was not inclination on his part that had led him to leave his quiet home at Tekoa and plunge into the turmoil of a public life at Bethel; it was an irresistible conviction that God had called him to this work: "Jehovah took me from following the flock," he says, "and Jehovah said unto me, Go prophesy unto my people Israel."[4]

This call came through the imparting of a new insight into the nature of God. Like all the other prophets, Amos "saw the Lord," and through that revelation he learned to view himself, his age, and his duty, in the light of the divine character. From the absence of reference in his book to an inaugural vision, such as Isaiah records,[5] it is probable that he did not have this experience. The impression made by his words is, that he was led to his higher conception of God through contemplation of the wonders of the world of nature and of history.

In iii. 2–5 he exhibits the uniform sequence of cause and effect in a way which comes singularly

[1] ii. 12. [2] v. 10. [3] v. 13. [4] vii. 15. [5] Is. vi.

close to the modern conception of the reign of law. Following back this idea of causality to its logical conclusion, he grasps the thought that Jehovah is the great first cause of all things. If calamity befall a city, Jehovah must have caused it.[1] He has formed the mountains and created the winds; He reads the secret thought in the heart of man; He eclipses the sun when it has just risen; He is exalted above all that is high on earth; His name is Jehovah, the God of hosts.[2]

This was Amos's new insight into the character of God. With that revelation came his call. Obscure man as he was, he saw that Israel was not worshipping the true Jehovah, and that it was rushing to an abyss of ruin. He must lift up his voice in warning. He could no more help prophesying, he tells us in the matchless words of iii. 8, than one can help fearing when one hears a lion roar: "The lion hath roared, who will not fear; Jehovah God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" Under this impulse he left his farm and his flocks in Tekoa and went up alone through the land of Judah, past Jerusalem with its great temple, over the frontier of the northern kingdom, to Bethel, the nearest large city of Israel.

[1] iii. 6. [2] iv. 13; cf. v. 8; ix. 5, 6.

A glorious sight must have burst upon his view as he ascended the slope which led up to Bethel. Lying close to the border of Judah, and commanding the main highway between the north and the south, this city had been strongly fortified by successive monarchs and offered an imposing prospect of walls, forts, and battlemented palaces. High above all towered the great temple which Jeroboam I. had built to be a rival to Solomon's temple, and which the devotion of succeeding ages had enlarged and beautified. Consecrated by its association with the lives of the Patriarchs, this sanctuary had come to be the chief holy-place of the northern kingdom, "a king's sanctuary and a royal house,"[1] whither all the people of the northern kingdom came up to the annual feasts.[2] Although not the capital, Bethel was a chief seat of the priesthood;[3] and of the prophetic order.[4] It was also a favorite residence of the rich and the noble, whose villas and gardens covered the neighboring hills, and was perhaps the largest, and strongest city of the kingdom.

The kingdom of the ten tribes was then at the zenith of its glory. The terrible wars with Syria,

[1] vii. 13.
[2] 1 Ki. xii. 33.
[3] 1 Ki. xii. 32; Am. vii. 10.
[4] 2 Ki. ii. 3; Am. vii. 14.

which had so long drained its resources, had ceased, for Damascus had all that she could do to defend herself against the Assyrians. Left in peace by Syria, and not yet reached by Assyria, Israel rose to such prosperity, that it seemed as if the ancient glory of David and Solomon had returned. Jeroboam II., who was then on the throne, had "restored the border of Israel from the entering in of Hamath unto the sea of the Arabah."[1]

As a result of military success and commercial enterprise the accumulation of wealth in Israel was greater than had ever been known before. The rich lived in palaces of hewn stone,[2] and of ivory.[3] They reposed on soft couches with damask coverings.[4] They lay upon beds of ivory and stretched themselves upon their sofas, and ate lambs selected out of the flocks and calves fattened in the stall. They sang to the accompaniment of their harps, and composed songs for themselves, which they thought as fine as those of David. They drank their beakers of wine and anointed themselves with their precious ointments.[5] A luxury existed which was unknown in the old simple

[1] 2 Ki. xiv. 25, 28; Am. vi. 1–4, 13, 14. [2] Am. v. 11.
[3] iii. 15. [4] iii. 12. [5] vi. 4–6.

days, when Israel was chiefly a pastoral and agricultural people.

This wealth, however, was very unevenly distributed. An aristocracy had absorbed for itself all the advantages of national prosperity, and the community at large was poorer than before. Society was divided into the extremes of the very rich and the very poor. This condition is always dangerous, and history shows that, unless some force appears to counteract it, it is likely to wreck a nation.

Social degeneracy was both the sign and the cause of religious degeneracy. There is no evidence, it is true, that the people who came to the temple at Bethel had given up the worship of Jehovah or had combined with it the worship of heathen gods. The fundamental difficulty with Israel's religion, as Amos found it, was not its rejection of Jehovah, but its false conception of his character. Heathenism had nominally been cast out through the efforts of Elijah, Elisha, and Jehu; in reality it had transformed the religion of Israel. Here at the main sanctuary of the kingdom the God of the forefathers was worshipped under the form of a golden bullock.[1] For the

[1] 1 Ki. xii. 28.

mass of the people Jehovah was nothing more than the patron-god of their race. They regarded him as essentially similar to Baal, Molech, and Chemosh, the patron-gods of their neighbors, and the popular creed was summed up in the words, "Jehovah is with us."[1]

The inevitable consequence of this conception of God was, that the religion of the northern kingdom had sunk to be the merest formalism. Splendid feasts were celebrated, costly sacrifices were offered, music and psalmody made the services at Bethel and the other sanctuaries attractive to the senses,[2] but there was no more true piety in the elaborate ritual than in the celebrations of the heathen.

The decline in religion was accompanied with a rapid decline in morals. Alongside of a punctilious observance of outward religion, open licentiousness prevailed.[3] The nobles, who were rolling in wealth, ground the poor to the earth by their exactions.[4] Justice was no longer obtainable.[5] The schools of the prophets no longer gave forth a warning voice.[6] The few who remained faithful to

[1] v. 14. [2] iv. 4 *sq.*; v. 21 *sq.*; viii. 10 *sq.*
[3] ii. 7 *sq.* [4] ii. 8; iii. 10; iv. 1; v. 11; vi. 3; viii. 4–6.
[5] ii. 6; v. 7, 12; vi. 12; viii. 5 *sq.* [6] vii. 12–14.

ancient belief and ancient uprightness were mocked and persecuted by their fellow countrymen.[1]

Such is the picture of Israel drawn for us in the book of Amos, splendid on the surface, rotten at the heart, like a basket of over-ripe fruit.[2] It is the same kind of a picture on a smaller scale that Tacitus and Juvenal give us of pagan Rome at the height of her glory. Into the midst of this corrupt civilization Amos came as a preacher of righteousness. History has few sublimer spectacles than this solitary man, armed only with the truth, entering the great city with the purpose of converting a nation.

Amos probably came forward with his message at a time when one of the national feasts was being celebrated at Bethel. All classes were present, the king and his nobles, the fine ladies of Samaria, the rich aristocrats of Bethel and other cities, and the multitude of common people who could claim no distinction either of birth or of wealth. All met here on the common ground of enjoyment, for the feasts at Bethel, far from being solemn occasions, were characterized by wine-drinking, mirth, and license, quite after the manner of Israel's heathen neighbors.[3]

[1] ii. 12; v. 10, 13; vii. 10 *sq.* [2] viii. 1.
[3] ii. 7, 8; viii. 3, 10; Hos. ii. 11; iv. 11 *sq.*

While the revelry was at its height, Amos suddenly appeared. Addressing the people in the court of the temple, as the professional prophets were wont to do, he captured their attention by beginning his address in a way which led them to suppose that he was about to reiterate their favorite doctrine that Israel was the chosen people of Jehovah which no harm could befall. In stirring poetic language he pictured a disaster which should come from the east and overwhelm successively Damascus, Philistia, Phœnicia, Edom, Ammon, Moab, and Judah because of their sins against God and humanity. Then when his hearers were on tiptoe with expectation that now he would sketch the glory of Israel after her rivals have perished, to the amazement of all he continued, "Thus saith Jehovah: for three transgressions of Israel, yea for four, I will not hold back its doom." [1]

It is difficult to imagine the astonishment and rage which this announcement must have produced. Such doctrine was as strange and as hateful to the prophet's hearers as Paul's repudiation of Israel's prerogative was to the Jews of his day. The reply which sprang instantly to all lips was,

[1] ii. 6.

This is impossible; we are the chosen people of Jehovah, whom he has brought up out of the land of Egypt. To this Amos answered with magnificent rhetorical abruptness: "Hear this word that Jehovah hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought out of the land of Egypt. You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore, — I will visit upon you all your iniquities." [1]

This was the fundamental thought of Amos's message: judgment is coming swift and sure upon the kingdom of Israel, unless it repents and reforms both life and religion. For at least two years [2] he continued to deliver this word of the Lord at Bethel, and possibly occasionally at Samaria also. His book is not a single sermon, but the substance of his preaching during the entire period. The first three main divisions of this book develop the three leading propositions of Amos's teaching: i. 2–iv. 3, the rising Assyrian empire shall engulf Israel along with the other nations; iv. 4–v. 17, Israel's ritual service is worthless to win the favor of God and to ward off the judgment, for the God who is worshipped at the sanctuaries of Israel is not Jehovah,[3] and the true God

[1] iii. 1, 2; cf. ix. 7. [2] i. 1. [3] iv. 4.–v. 9.

is pleased, not by sacrifices, but by righteousness;[1] v. 18–vi. 14, the "Day of Jehovah" shall not be a day of exaltation for Israel, as it fondly expects, but of the same ruin which shall fall upon the heathen. The fourth division, vii. 1–ix. 15, contains a summing up of the teaching of the first three divisions.

Amos's preaching was distasteful to all classes in the community: to the nobles because he denounced their luxury and their oppressions; to the professional prophets because he contradicted their promises of peace; to the common people because he antagonized their national pride. Enough of the old reverence for a prophet still lingered, however, to protect him for a time from violence; but when one day he went so far as to proclaim in the temple, "Thus saith the Lord, I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword," Amaziah, the high priest of Bethel, concluded that toleration could no longer be shown to such a man, accused him of high treason to the king, and ordered him to leave the country.[2]

Nothing could give a better insight both into the degeneracy of the age and the faith of the prophet than the precious little narrative which

[1] v. 10–17. [2] vii. 9–13.

interrupts the prophetic words in the fourth section of the book. Amaziah, the representative of traditionalism and self-satisfied ecclesiasticism, sneeringly bids Amos go back to Judah, where his doctrine of the downfall of Israel will be acceptable to his hearers, and where he can earn a better living by prophesying than is possible at Bethel, "the king's sanctuary and the royal house." Amos, the obscure preacher, in whom the light of divine truth has been kindled, answers simply: I am not one of the professional prophets with whom you are familiar, who proclaim only that which they know will be acceptable to their hearers. "I am a breeder of sheep and a cultivator of mulberry-figs: and Jehovah took me from following the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go prophesy unto my people Israel." It is a type of the conflict which reappears in every age between those who say, Preach our way or get out of our church, and those who are conscious that God has given them a message which they must proclaim.

Amos was not the man to allow himself to be driven out of Bethel by mere threats, but it was not long apparently before he was compelled to leave the northern kingdom and to return to his home at Tekoa. There, as a last resort, to reach

those whom he could no longer influence by word of mouth, he composed the book which bears his name. Of his life after his return to Judah we unfortunately know nothing, for Jewish tradition on this subject is worthless. We do not know even whether he continued to prophesy. One thing only is certain: his book must have exerted a wide influence in the northern kingdom, for if it had not been so, copies would not have been multiplied, and it would not have survived the destruction which within fifty years came upon Israel. It was well known to Hosea and is frequently quoted in his addresses. In this prophet Amos found a worthy successor, who was able to take up and carry forward the work which he had been compelled to leave unfinished.

THE BOOK OF JONAH.

XIV.

THE BOOK OF JONAH.

By the REV. JAMES M. WHITON, Ph. D.
Brooklyn, New York.

IF a precious stone were to be estimated, not for its color or brilliancy, but on the results of its chemical analysis, as showing it to consist, say, of carbon or of silicon, it would not be a greater missing of the mark than has happened in the case of the unique relic of Hebrew literature which we have in the book of Jonah.

A hot debate, curiously fancied to involve the very existence of a divine revelation, has been raised as to whether this book is a piece of history or of fiction. But its literary characteristics, which go far to solve that question, and the evidently dramatic cast of its lessons of human frailty and divine mercy, have been singularly ignored. This has happened because it was written in Hebrew, that sacred tongue. If it had been written in Greek, it would have been put into the Apocrypha, and treated on its intrinsic merits, like the book of Tobit.

In a literary discussion of the book of Jonah the question of authorship hardly exists. It is plainly about Jonah, not by him. It is the anonymous work of some humane and catholic-minded man, so far in advance of his times — in some respects even of ours — that, did even tradition give any clew to his personality, we should gladly inscribe him in the roll of the world's great teachers. What the author of Ecclesiastes has done in selecting so great a character as Solomon for the spokesman of his wisdom, the author of Jonah has done. He sets forth contrasting lessons of man's infirmity and God's mercy, as suggested by the personal experiences which he attributes to the great prophet of a former generation.

Of Jonah himself hardly more than the name remains in history. We know only what is so briefly mentioned in 2 Kings xiv. 25, that he flourished (in the eighth century B.C.) during the reign of Jeroboam II., by whose victorious arms the sadly battered kingdom was restored to a brief enjoyment of its Davidic glory. In promoting this national renaissance Jonah is said to have borne his part, as did the better-known prophets of the Davidic era. He must, therefore, though he has failed of proportionate commemoration, have been

a considerable figure in tradition for some generations following. But that it was in a later generation that he was selected as the hero, so to speak, of the book which bears his name, appears in the description it gives of Nineveh. For it was not till a century after him that Nineveh, as Professors Schrader and Sayce have pointed out, attained the dimensions ascribed to it, as a city whose circumference was a three days' journey.

Our main question, however, relates to the matter of the book, its subject and aim and literary form of treatment. It appears at a glance that this narrative is of a very different class from the other books which bear the names of prophets. These contain discourses more or less interleaved with contemporary history. This, on the contrary, is a tale of personal experiences — the Adventures of Jonah, a modern might entitle it. It is properly classed with the stories of Ruth and Esther, and owes its place among the so-called minor prophets to the name it bears.

It is the most intensely individualistic book in the Bible. In this sense it is wholly the book of Jonah. He is not only the chief person, but the only person introduced by name. The theme is the experiences of a solitary man, alone on the sea

amid heathen strangers, alone in the waves as a perishing outcast amid the monsters of the deep, alone in a far foreign land among a people whom he hates. The experiences of this lonely wanderer are related as divine lessons to him, recognized as such by his conscience, and recognizable as such by every conscience without comment by the narrator. Wayward, wilful, intolerant, this man characteristically belongs to a race described by its own prophets as a stiff-necked and rebellious people. The correctives supplied by his experience also epitomize his people's historical training, alike by their chastisement in adversity, and their education into a hope in God not for themselves alone, but for all mankind — a training, which, from so raw a missionary as Jonah, led up at length to so consummate an apostle as Paul.

The literary form in which these suggestive experiences of Jonah are set forth is at once simple and striking — a narrative of successive incidents with just enough of connected circumstance to point the moral. Nothing can be simpler than this mere series of pictures, thrown, as it were, on canvas by the stereopticon, and nothing more striking than these successive scenes — the storm, the sea-monster, the sheltering gourd, and then the

abruptness with which the spectacle ends, and vivid imagination gives place to calm reflection. The tone and style of the whole is that of an Eastern story-teller, not of a prophet or religious teacher, though a story-teller may doubtless be as effective in religious teaching as a professed prophet. In such a case our judgment whether the matters related are historical or fictitious must depend — as in the case where Satan appears in the prologue to the book of Job — upon the nature and style of the story itself, and the character of the things narrated.

The first scene is the Tempest. The story launches us at once into a raging sea. It is for Jonah that it rages. He is a runaway servant, to arrest whom God has sent forth the storm. Sent on God's errand to the far eastern Nineveh, he is skulking off to the far western Tarshish. In the extremity of peril all hands are called to prayers. These failing, seamanship failing, recourse is had to divination to discover the miscreant who has provoked wrath so unappeasable. The lot is cast. It falls on Jonah. He recognizes the writ of divine justice, and manfully urges his shipmates to save themselves by surrendering him to his doom. Reluctantly, all further struggles failing, they comply.

Straightway the tempest ceases, like an officer of the law departing with a captured prisoner, while the ship's company bow in awestruck adoration of Jonah's God. Thus, in a way more compatible with ancient than modern modes of thought about the causes of storms, the story points the moral of many a tale of guilt in every age: "Be sure your sin will find you out." Utterly at variance as it is with any tenable theory of the rise and subsidence of storms, not less strangely is its moral lesson illustrated in many a modern process of detection by which a wrongdoer is tracked and apprehended. Stories of this sort are common enough. But this stands out among them with a unique charm. The human sympathy that even mortal terrors cannot suppress is seen braving death, rather than yield a stranger like Jonah to the confessed displeasure of his God. Contrasting the tenderness of these heathen sailors toward this suspected alien both to their race and their religion with his subsequent hardness toward the Ninevites, we recognize the same lesson that Jesus put into the parable of the good Samaritan. The Church has not yet outgrown the need of taking lessons in humanity from men outside her pale. For an early and honest recognition of that need we are debtors to the book of Jonah.

The second scene is the Deliverance. Jonah is treated as a penitent transgressor. He has humbly accepted, nay, invited and embraced, his punishment, than which there is no surer sign of penitence. But, cast as he is into the raging sea, some means of rescue must be provided. For this service a sea-monster is in waiting, which, swallowing Jonah, transports him in three days to land. Here, as in the tale of the miraculous storm, and again in that of the Ninevite cattle clad in sackcloth and sharing their masters' fast, and again in that of the gourd that grew up in a night, the note of imagination is unmistakable. The consistent exuberance of the writer's fancy is sufficient evidence that he is no matter-of-fact historian. He seems rather to be taxing the powers of fancy to set in intensest light a truth which even now Christian thought has not fully apprehended.

The judgments of God are for salvation, not for destruction. The apparently hopeless have not been consigned to despair. Desperate may seem their case, as of one swallowed up by the sea, or even devoured by a sea-monster. Yet, even so, such prayer as Jonah's is not unheard or ineffectual. Though dark and long the way up out of the abyss to the shore, the depths shall give back the

submissive penitent to the land of the living. It is the fundamental truth of the Gospel, which Jonah here sets forth in the boldest figures: salvation to the uttermost for all who seek it. A sorry mistake have they made, who, in turning aside here to fight over a fancied miracle, have drawn attention away from this Gospel in the book of Jonah.

The so-called prayer of Jonah, we should notice, is introduced with true art as a musical interlude, which here divides the narrative into two equal parts. A considerable part of its language seems to be borrowed from the Psalms. It is, in fact, a psalm, in which thanksgiving for deliverance blends with reminiscences of the prayerful longings of the prisoner in the abyss. Surcharged with religious feeling, it comes in to lift the whole story to that higher level of devout reflection, in which its moral and religious lessons most readily reach the reader's mind.

The third and last scene is the Wideness of God's Mercy, especially as contrasted with the narrowness of man's. After all his experience of the humanity of his shipmates and the grace of his God, Jonah has not yet learned that our prayer for mercy "doth teach us all to render the deeds of mercy." But in this respect neither was he

then, nor is any one now a solitary sinner. It is still one of the dark spots in the character even of some religious people, that they whose faults most need the covering of charity are least ready to accord it to others. And not for this time any less than for that time is the tender austerity needed of that matchless rebuke which Jonah finally receives.

The scene shifts from the lonely sea to the populous city. Obedient at length to the divine command the prophet delivers his message in the capital of Assyria: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." No portents bear him out; no comet blazes; no foe threatens. The apparition of this singular prophet was itself deemed a portent by a susceptible people. Conscience responded to the judgment warning; a fast was proclaimed; the king himself sat in ashes; the very beasts wore penitential sackcloth. Thus picturesquely imaged is the cry for mercy now lifted from the city, as it had been lifted from the sea. And again God hears, and pitying spares.

But Jonah is pitiless; nay, "very angry." He would rather die, than that these penitents should live. He frankly lets all his badness out, and confesses to God that it was just because he knew

things would turn out so, that he had attempted his flight to Tarshish, unwilling that his prediction of woe should be frustrated even by divine forgiveness. Not least impressive among the marvels of the story is the invincible patience in which the All-merciful expostulates with this frantic child — true type of the disobedient people to whom the tale is told — "Doest thou well to be angry?"

But he sulks away from this rebuke, hoping for the worst. He waits, and looks with evil eye for what may befall the city, and is solaced meanwhile by the gourd-vine, that wondrously springs up to screen him from the sun. But it is as suddenly blighted, and again he passionately complains that life is not worth living. Again the divine question is put to conscience: "Doest thou well to be angry?" and he moodily flings it back. His bitterness is explicable only by the reflection, that Nineveh was the power from which Israel had most to dread, so that only in the fall of his country's foe lay his hope for his country's security. He needs — but no more than some need now — to learn that love of country is compatible with love of rival countries. His intolerant Judaism requires the same reminder that it received long after from Paul: "Is God the God of Jews only?

Is he not also the God of Gentiles?" The all-inclusive compassion of God, embracing all nations alike, and thoughtful even for his dumb creatures, the truth as needful now as then to shame away the inhumanity of man, is the climax which the story here reaches with a question of unanswerable rebuke: "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, . . . and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle?"

This question put, the story ends, for the question carries its own answer, and there is no more to be said. The silence that follows is like the dropping of a curtain over a tableau. The impression it leaves lingering in the eye is a radiant vision of the Mercy that endureth forever.

Such a story easily vindicates its place among the gems of ancient literature. Its lessons are indeed made familiar to us by many repetitions in more modern forms. But while men prize the relics of ancient art that time has spared even more highly than the modern reproductions that can be multiplied at will, they surely should prize this splendid apologue. In ruder times and more forbidding conditions it opened the way toward

that humanizing of religion for which the world still groans and waits, in which the love of God shall have become in manifestation, what it is now in profession, inseparable from the love of man.

The humanizing of theology also still waits to be achieved; nor will it be till riddance has been made of that pitiless theory of the future life with which Christian interpreters have encumbered the Gospel of Christ. It is commended to us by the appeal, "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, and should not I spare Nineveh?" Has the logic here involved been duly weighed by those who think that God maintains some hopeless sinners in an existence which is capable only of misery forever? For a better thought of God our own contemporaries, no less than the men of former times, must still be referred to "the sign of the prophet Jonah."

THE PARABLES.

XV.

THE PARABLES.

By PROF. MARVIN R. VINCENT, D.D.

Of Union Theological Seminary.

"THE kingdom of Heaven is like—" That sentence from the lips of Jesus was sure to command attention. A prophet was expected to speak in parables, but a similitude in itself has a fascination for minds of all classes. If it is true that similitudes often cover fallacies, and that no argument is so untrustworthy as an argument from analogy, it is also true that similitudes, rightly used, point and enforce truths, and that an analogy is sometimes a sound argument.

The fascination of parabolic teaching arises principally from the delight which every one feels in detecting a real likeness between things which have been supposed to be utterly unlike. The apt similitude thus carries with it the novel flavor of a discovery. Archbishop Trench has pointed out how this fact has stamped itself upon the verb

"like" or "liken," expressing pleasure based upon the recognition of resemblance.

Comparison is the fundamental idea of the parable. The word primarily means the putting of one thing beside another. Hence it was expressed in old English by **biword**, and the same idea appears in the German *Beispiel*, compounded of *bei*, "beside," and *spel*, "a discourse or narration." The same notion underlies the proverb and the brief oracular saying, the song or poem in which an example is presented by way of comparison,[1] and a word or discourse which is enigmatical until the meaning is developed by application or comparison.[2] The parable differs from the fable in dealing with religious or moral truth as distinguished from lessons of worldly prudence. It differs from the allegory in keeping the truth and the illustration distinct and parallel, while in the allegory these are blended. As related to the proverb, the parable is an expanded proverb, and the word "parable" is more than once applied in the New Testament to a brief proverbial saying, such as "Physician, heal thyself."[3]

[1] As Micah ii. 4; Habbakuk ii. 6.

[2] As Ps. xlix. 4; lxxviii. 2; Num. xxiii. 7, 18; xxiv. 3, 15.

[3] See also Matt. xv. 14, 15; xxiv. 32; Mark. xiii. 28.

The distinguishing mark of those longer utterances which are more commonly known as Christ's parables, is, that they are complete figurative histories or narratives, not merely alluding to physical facts, but combining them into a connected series, the whole series furnishing a pictorial representation of doctrine belonging to the religious sphere. The parables, therefore, by means of facts in the world of sense, picture great corresponding truths in the spiritual world.

In the person of Jesus a divine life and a divine wisdom entered a world which was dominated by sense. The Jews had sensualized their old and truthful religious conceptions. The "Kingdom of God" with its vast range of spiritual meaning was to them only a visible earthly sovereignty, to be inaugurated by a temporal Jewish prince, who was to establish an exclusively Jewish commonwealth, to exterminate all enemies of Judaism, and to set up a Jewish court with all the outward pomp which the Oriental mind attached to the idea of a king.

But at the root of this false and sensuous conception of Messianic sovereignty, was a general insensibility to the eternal presence and operation of the forces of the spiritual kingdom in this world, and to the organic connection between the two.

This world and the kingdom of Heaven were conceived as two distinct things with little or nothing in common. Hence it came as a surprise when Jesus said, "The kingdom of Heaven is like a sower; like a net with fishes; like leaven in meal."

But Jesus did not merely assume a resemblance between such things and the heavenly kingdom. His parables were more than illustrations. The resemblance rested upon a real, organic connection. The fundamental assumption of the parables is that Heaven and Earth together form one kingdom of God. The point and force of the parables are missed by those who see in them only illustrations of a spiritual kingdom drawn from another and a different kingdom, and who regard the correspondences as mere happy coincidences. The felicitousness of the correspondences and analogies is due to the fact that the sown field, the lake with its fish, the pearl-merchant, the grain of mustard-seed, belong in the same kingdom with faith, love, holiness, prayer, duty, the Spirit and the word of God. The kingdom of nature and human society lies within the lines of the kingdom of heaven, and the laws of the one are the laws of the other. The same spiritual and moral principles apply on the lower level as on the higher.

Take, for example, the parable of the Talents. It is a story of men who, with a wise economy, invested their capital and realized a profit on their investment. This every one would recognize as simple, worldly prudence. One man locked up his capital and let it lie idle, and, naturally, received no return. All would agree in calling him a fool. But what the shrewdest hearer of that parable was slow to perceive, and what it was Jesus' main object to make him perceive was, that what was wisdom or folly in business was wisdom or folly in morals and religion; that the very same principle which applied to money applied to character; that moral and spiritual endowments were as really capital as five or two talents; that investment and exchange were as necessary to profit in the one case as in the other; that failure to invest entailed loss in the moral and spiritual sphere no less than in the sphere of business. "Thou *oughtest* to have put my money to the exchangers." The holders of the talents were under obligation to invest, as men of ordinary worldly wisdom, much more as holders of a trust; a similar obligation attached to the holders of moral capital.

Natural science has long since taught us that exchange is a condition of power; that power is

convertible, and capable of expression in different terms; that it attains its normal development only through the variation and multiplication of its forms; that force perpetuates and conserves itself by conversion; that he who ignores this law not only does not develop, but impairs his original power. There is nothing strange or unnatural in the higher application of the law. The higher the type of life, the more possibility of conversion, the more "plasticity" it has. God's redemptive economy means running the natural endowment of men into grander and more varied forms of spiritual life and power. Except a man be "converted," he cannot enter into the realm of this divine life and power, — the kingdom of Heaven. Conversion is exchange, — exchange of masters, principles, aims; of the lower for the higher life; of the kingdom of sense for the kingdom of spirit; of the kingdom which is meat and drink for the kingdom which is righteousness, joy, and peace.

Science furnishes other illustrations of the truth that the physical and the spiritual world form one kingdom. The parable of the Leaven, for instance, turns on the pervasion of a dead mass with a living principle through the agency of fermentation. Pasteur showed that ferments are liv-

ing organisms, and that fermentation takes place through the contact of the thing to be fermented with the living protoplasm of the ferment. The parable therefore announces a law which operates alike in the bread, in the individual character, and in society, — the law that only life can transform life. Mere institutions, formulas, precepts, cannot morally reshape society. The kingdom of Heaven is a reign of life, a triumph of life. Christ is the Life, and comes that men may have more abundant life. His precepts acquire their vitality and their power over men from his life. Truth divorced from life is essential falsehood. Churches, sacraments, catechisms, creeds have no more leavening virtue than a stone unless informed with the life of Jesus, the "quickening Spirit."

But these facts of nature have no moral or spiritual meaning apart from man. A moral law cannot appeal to a beast. That one soil is better than another, that a seed fructifies only by parting with its original seed-form, that a great growth springs from a small seed, that fermentation pervades and animates a dead mass, — are mere physical facts which acquire a higher meaning only when they touch the region of human life and human will. That a soil is stony or full of thorns

are facts entirely without moral significance until they come into relation with a rational and moral being, and with his intelligent effort to sustain his physical life. Therefore the nature-parables of Christ habitually deal with nature in contact with man. The vine is not a wild vine, but is planted in a vineyard and tended and pruned by a husbandman; the field with its different soils is sown by a sower; the leaven is put by a woman into flour. Then the spiritual lessons emerge. Man alone renders them possible; man alone can receive and interpret them. Man is the connecting link between the two sides of the kingdom of God. The spiritual and the physical combine and interchange their meanings in him, and in him exhibit one kingdom. "Consider the lilies how they grow," and in what colors they are arrayed. That fact of nature is exalted into a great lesson of divine providence the moment that a man appears with doubts and questionings as to wherewithal he shall be clothed. Then first nature utters a spiritual truth; then first the natural process, as men call it, becomes the process of a personal, divine, fatherly care, which, if it provide for the lilies, must surely be relied upon to provide for a creature so much better than they.

The buried seed-corn springs up in beauty, and the valleys stand thick with the full corn in the ear; but the lessons of the triumph of life over death, of death unto self, of moral fruitfulness, have no existence apart from man, the heir of immortality. Through him the law of the grain appears as the law of the soul. It is through the contact of nature with man that earth becomes

> "crammed with Heaven,
> And every common bush afire with God."

In our study of the literary character of the parables, we find that they answer certain familiar and commonly accepted tests. We are always impressed with the fundamental and universal character of their teaching. They do not deal with occasional situations, but with great principles of universal and permanent application. Superficial readers fail to detect their depth through their simplicity and brevity, and easily persuade themselves that they have grasped their meaning when they have discovered in them certain obvious suggestions of familiar spiritual truths. Every one must recognize the skill with which they are constructed in order to convey universal truths to men of every race and age. Their setting is neces-

sarily Oriental, and they are more vividly realized through an acquaintance with the Oriental environment. For instance, the lesson of the woman sweeping for the lost coin, becomes more clear and pointed when it is known that an Eastern woman of the poorer class carries all her little wealth upon her head in strings of coins, many of which are heirlooms, so that the loss of the smallest piece may mean to her far more than its actual value, through its connection with family traditions and relationships. But this fact affords no serious embarrassment to a modern reader. Such details are easily learned, and in some parables the Oriental characteristics appear only in subordinate features which mostly explain themselves, while the main incidents appeal to universal apprehension. Such, for example, are those which turn on the phenomena of germination, as the Sower, the Seed growing secretly, and the Mustard Seed. The story of the Prodigal Son is as readily apprehended in all its essential features by an Anglo-Saxon as by an Asiatic.

Again, the parables appeal to the universal understanding by their simplicity and unity of structure. They are not complicated and confused by the attempt to make a single parable

illustrate several truths at once. Each parable centres in a single lesson. It may contain several incidents and suggest several truths, but all these are made subordinate to one point. The parable of the Leaven, for instance, has for its central truth the power of the gospel to pervade and quicken society with a divine principle of life. The presentation of this truth contains four factors: a lifeless lump of dough; a piece of leaven; the hiding of the leaven in the lump, and the permeation of the lump with the leavening principle. As side-touches there are the woman and the three measures. These are in harmony with the main outlines. There is a verisimilitude in the selection of a woman instead of a man, and of three measures of meal rather than a smaller quantity. In the East bread-making is distinctively woman's work, and bread is so literally the staff of life instead of a mere accompaniment of a meal, as with us, that the use of more than a bushel of flour for a single baking is simply true to fact. But these two details are subordinate. They belong to the picture rather than to the lesson, and should be kept in their subordinate place. The parables preserve a correct and artistic relation between foreground and perspective, between body

and drapery. Many of the side details are both graphic and suggestive, but whenever they are so emphasized as to divert attention from the one central truth, the teaching of the parable is obscured and its force is lost. It is the highest evidence of the artistic perfection of the Sistine Madonna, that notwithstanding the youthful beauty of Barbara, the striking attitude of Sixtus, the charm of the lovely cherubs on the parapet, and the gorgeous painting of the robes of the two side figures, the eye dwells finally upon the Virgin Mother and her Child. The exaggerated emphasis upon subordinate details and the attempts to press them into the service of theological controversies or of pet fancies, have contributed largely to convert the parables into riddles.

Yet the single truth of a parable is commonly many-sided. An inferior teacher would attempt to treat the different sides within the compass of one parable; Christ, on the other hand, often throws the different phases into separate parables. There is frequently a superficial resemblance between two parables which easily creates the impression that their lessons are identical; but though the lessons of the two may overlap, and may issue from a common truth, no two parables cover precisely

the same ground or illustrate the same phase of truth. The parables of the Friend at Midnight and the Unjust Judge are alike based upon the truth of God's generous response to the supplications of his needy and suffering servants; but the Friend at Midnight illustrates the liberality of God in contrast with the selfishness of man, while the Unjust Judge exhibits God's righteousness in contrast with man's injustice. The patch of new cloth on the old garment, and the new wine in the old skins, alike start with the fact of incongruity. In both cases there is a combination which cannot stand. The new patch tears loose from the rotten texture of the old robe, the old skin bottles burst under the fermentation of the new wine; but the patch is the lesson of a new doctrine in contact with an old and effete system; the new wine in the old skins shows the futility of the effort to foster a new principle of life in an unrenewed nature.

The parables are remarkable as stories. Christ appears in them as a great narrator. To tell a story well is a high literary accomplishment. From the days of Homer and Herodotus men of all classes have sat at the feet of the story-teller. The Odyssey will never lack readers; the Pilgrim's

Progress is "loved by those who are too simple to admire it," and the reading of Robinson Crusoe is not confined to children. The parable-stories commend themselves by their verisimilitude. "It is the highest miracle of genius," says Macaulay, "that things which are not should be as though they were; that the imaginations of one mind should become the personal recollections of another." Scores of people have read De Foe's "History of the Plague in London" without a suspicion that it was not a truthful chronicle of facts. It might not be safe to assert too positively that all the stories in the parables are fictions. It is quite possible that, in many cases, Christ simply repeated what he had himself seen and heard. However that may be, every detail might have been an actual fact. Jesus never employed an impossible or an improbable incident, and never took it out of its appropriate setting.

The stories, moreover, are full of movement. They run. They do not fret the reader by dwelling upon subordinate facts of no special interest. Free course is given to the main current of the story. The intrinsic interest of the incidents is not sacrificed to the idiosyncrasies of the writer. Characters are portrayed in such a way as to furn-

ish their own analysis, and incidents are combined so as to exhibit the motive and the philosophy of their evolution. The stories tell themselves. They contain a large dramatic element and use dialogue with telling effect. What a combination of vivid portraiture, startling incident, pathos, and dramatic power is the parable of the Prodigal Son; yet how condensed; how few and how telling the strokes; how broad and free, yet how definite the outlines! How promptly and directly the main motive of the story is struck! No tedious analysis is needed to acquaint the reader with the characters. How vivid the picture of dissipation in the far country, — a picture which is partly lost in the English version. "He made his substance fly, living unsavingly." No need to dilate upon the misery of the young debauchee; it is effectively portrayed by two or three strong, rapid touches, — a hireling, in the fields, feeding swine, hungry and eating swine's food. What deep suggestiveness in the words "when he came to himself," as if he had but now awakened from a long delirium. And then the quickened movement with which the story gathers itself up and presses to its blessed close. One feels the eagerness with which the poor wretch hastens back to his home, and

finds the floods rushing to his eyes as he follows him into the clasp of his father's arms; and finally, what consummate art is that which has conveyed into the climax of the story the glad tumult which pervades the house! How the orders pour from the happy father. My son has come back. Quick! Bring the best robe! Bring the shoes! Bring the ring! Get ready the feast! Let us eat and drink and be merry! This my son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found.

With all their picturesque and dramatic features, only a few of the parables lend themselves to Christian art. It is quite possible to paint a sower, a fisherman drawing his seine, a mustard-tree, or a woman kneading flour, but not so as to make them teach the lessons which Christ drew from them. The Good Samaritan, the Shepherd with the lost Sheep on his shoulders, and the Ten Virgins afford more points for pictorial teaching; but it is perhaps impossible to treat any one of the parables in a picture which shall at once preserve its own unity and fully convey the lesson of the parable. The Prodigal Son has been a favorite theme, but each picture emphasizes one feature and gives hints of others in the background. The return of the penitent son is often

treated, as in the magnificent picture by Murillo in the gallery of the Duke of Sutherland. The youth is locked in his father's embrace. His emaciated countenance tells of his suffering, and the embroidery on his tattered robe of the splendor of his riotous living. A little white dog leaps up to caress him. On one side a man and a boy lead in the fatted calf, and on the other appear three servants bearing a light-blue silk dress of Spanish fashion, and the gold ring. The Dutch painters usually portray the riotous living. An interesting picture by the younger Teniers in the Louvre, represents the prodigal feasting with two courtesans at a table in front of an inn, on the open shutter of which a tavern-score is chalked. In the right-hand corner is a sty where a boor is feeding swine. Holbein represents him feasting with his mistress and gambling with a sharper who is sweeping money off the table. The other parts of the story are portrayed in the background. The life among the swine is treated by Jordaens in the Dresden Gallery. The youth, with only a cloth about his loins, approaches a trough where swine are feeding, extending his hand and seeming to ask food of a surly swineherd, who points him to the trough. In the left hand corner a young rustic is playing

on a pipe, a sorrowful contrast to the delicious music of the halls of pleasure.

After all that has been said of the simplicity and vividness of Jesus' parabolic teaching, it remains true that the parables are by no means the easiest portions of the New Testament. They treat of a kingdom which has its mysteries no less than its every-day truths; and he who expects to find them only a picture-alphabet of Christian teaching will soon discover his mistake. Whatever lessons for the neophyte may lie upon their surface, their best is reserved for those who have dwelt longest in the kingdom of God and have penetrated farthest into its domain. Such will be ever finding in them profounder meanings and longer reaches of thought. They are suggestive rather than exhaustive. They are framed to stimulate inquiry and search. The problems of the kingdom of God must be worked out. It is not enough to turn to a key and to copy an answer. The parables do not furnish such a key. They reveal just enough to draw us farther within the lines of the heavenly kingdom. An answer to our question is not always possible, and not always the best thing that can be given us. Once within the realm to which the parables introduce us, we are

in contact with God himself, whose presence and touch are better than all explanations; and it is Christ's aim to put us in touch with God along the whole line of our life, and not at the single point of a hard question. It is a common idea that satisfaction consists in grasping truth; but a truth which grasps and carries a man often does far more for him than a truth which he grasps.

Hence the parables will perform their best and highest office for him who shall suffer them to place him upon the eternal principles which underlie and regulate the natural and the spiritual world alike; to learn his lessons from these, to drink at their deep wells of wisdom and comfort, and to feel their mighty uplift and the peace which is born of rest in the infinite. They will not do this for such as shall see in them only reflections of their own fancies and partisans of their own beliefs. It has been well said that the parables "were not intended to define truth but to illustrate it; and an illustration can never be made synonymous with a proposition. Indeed, one might as well try to represent an apple-tree in beauteous blossom by drawing a diagram of it, as to show how one or other phrase in a parable corresponds to the

articles of a creed."[1] He who shall come to these sayings with open eyes and docile spirit, seeking for truth and not for the justification of his own conceits; who shall see the kingdom of God as a kingdom of love and duty, of righteousness, joy, and peace, and not as a kingdom of religious systems and subtleties, will find them open windows commanding broad and inspiring outlooks over God's "land of far distances."[2]

[1] Dr. William H. Thomson: "The Parables by the Lake," one of the freshest and most suggestive of recent books on the parables.

[2] Isaiah xxxiii. 17.

LUKE AS AN HISTORIAN.

XVI.

LUKE AS AN HISTORIAN.

By PROF. G. FREDERICK WRIGHT, D.D.
Of Oberlin Theological Seminary.

THE uniform testimony of the early Christian writers,[1] as well as a great amount and variety of internal evidence, prove beyond reasonable doubt that the third Gospel and the book of Acts were written by the same person; and that their author was Luke, the "beloved physician," referred to in Col. iv. 14. That he was with Paul during his imprisonment at Rome is clear, not only from this passage, but from Philem. 24 and 2 Tim. iv. 11. The extent to which Luke accompanied Paul during his missionary journeys, is, without much doubt, indicated in those passages in the Acts beginning with the tenth verse of the sixteenth chapter, where the pronoun "we" is introduced as the subject. In

[1] Irenæus, Against Heresies, iii. 1; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, iii. 4; Tertullian, Against Marcion, iv. 5.

describing the voyage from Troas to Philippi, for example, the writer says, "We made a straight course to Samothrace," and later, "we went forth without the gate by the river side;" and "we sat down;" "and when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us," etc. These so-called "we" passages are specially numerous in chapters xx., xxi., and xxvii. In other portions of the book the subject is in the third person. Luke's association with Paul, therefore, enabled him to write a portion of the history as an eye-witness.

But, for the most part, he professes to write, not as an eye-witness, but as an ordinary historian collecting his evidence from such authentic sources as were within his reach. According to the introduction to the third Gospel, Luke had in view the instruction of an eminent contemporary named Theophilus, and he claims to write both systematically and with "perfect understanding of all things from the first;" and this information, he says, was largely obtained from documents in which others had recorded facts as recounted by "eye-witnesses and ministers of the word." The introduction to Acts refers to the Gospel as already written. Luke's claim to confidence as a historian is therefore of the highest order. If he really

was this intimate companion of Paul, and really possessed the spirit and opportunities of investigation which he professed to have, his word may be trusted without additional confirmation.

That he did live and write at the period assigned to him seems clear, among other things, from the abrupt ending of the book of Acts. If this book had been written after Paul's death, which took place in A. D. 64 or 65, some account of that tragic occurrence would certainly have been given. There is no reasonable explanation of an author's closing Paul's history with him in prison, except that it was written before the apostle was let out of prison and before he died. Luke, then, when he wrote his Gospel, was as near to the facts which he records concerning Christ's ministry, as a biographer of Abraham Lincoln writing in 1896 would be to the date of the President's assassination in 1865.

But the credibility of the historian is not wholly determined by his nearness to the events and his means of obtaining correct information. An equally important question is, What were his mental habits and equipment? Fortunately an unrivalled opportunity for testing both his fulness of knowledge and his accuracy of statement is

afforded by comparing Luke's writings with the incidental references made to the same circle of facts by other writers, and by recent geographical investigators. The narrative of the Gospels and Acts covers about sixty-five years of a period whose general history is remarkably open to the light of day; while the scenes of the narrative are indiscriminately spread over a large part of the Roman Empire. In no other region, and at no other period of the world's history, could there be a better opportunity incidentally to test the accuracy of an historian.

From beginning to end of his narrative, Luke writes in a frank, straightforward manner, with constant references to contemporaneous events and history and to the political and social conditions of the period. Apparently he is unconscious of running by this method any risk to his reputation for accuracy and credibility. His style is pre-eminently inartificial. Yet any one at all familiar with historical criticism cannot but see that this freedom of reference exposes the narrator to the hazard of innumerable and irreconcilable discrepancies, unless he is telling the truth, and his information is obtained at first hand. This free style of narrative affords to the critic all the opportunities for

verification which in legal procedure are secured by the cross-examination of a witness. So complicated is human history that nothing but the truth can endure microscopic criticism. It is impossible to manufacture an extended narrative of scenes in a well-known place and period which shall simulate the truth so perfectly that the joints and seams of fabrication shall not be apparent on close inspection. But Luke's narrative stands such inspection without revealing a flaw. A few illustrations only of how it endures the process can here be adduced.

In the first chapter of the Gospel, the writer refers to Herod as *king* of Judea, while in the third chapter, after a lapse of about thirty years, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate is not king, but *governor* of Judea; and a Herod and his brothers are *tetrarchs* in Galilee and in the region of Iturea and Trachonitis; and Lysanias is *tetrarch* of Abilene; while the time is more definitely fixed for the Jews by asserting that it is during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas. The significance of general accuracy in such free statements can be appreciated only by one who has carefully studied the changing history of those times.

But by means of such incidental references of Luke, we are enabled to follow with unerring steps the course of the rapid political changes in Palestine for more than sixty years. In the enrolment of Quirinius we learn the extent of power granted to the president of Syria (Luke ii. 2; Acts v. 37). In the martyrdom of James by Herod (Acts xii. 1) we get a glimpse of the temporary restoration of power in Palestine to the Herodian family; while in Acts xxiii. and xxiv. we find that the whole authority has been absorbed by the Roman power, and Felix is governor, and Porcius Festus his successor. From Acts xxv. 14 we again get a glimpse of a shadowy ecclesiastical power still exercised in Palestine by the Herods. In Acts xxii. and xxiii. there is an incidental but very vivid revelation of the division of the authority which for a limited time prevailed in Palestine between the Jewish high priest and the Roman procurator. The procurator had temporarily released Paul on learning that he was a Roman citizen, and set him down before the Jewish council to make his defence before them; but, finding that they were in violent disagreement over the matter, he exercised his imperial authority, and "commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring

him into the castle" (Acts xxiii. 10). Such were some of the complications of the history of Palestine alone. In other portions of the Roman Empire they were equally great.

Under the reign of Augustus Cæsar all the provinces of the Roman Empire were divided up between the senate and the emperor. The governors appointed by the senate were styled proconsuls; those reporting to Cæsar were designated by the military title, proprætor. But there were frequent transfers from one authority to the other, and the boundaries of the consular and prætorian provinces were continually changing. A late writer, treating of that period, and using those definite appellations, rather than more general terms, would be in constant and imminent danger of exposing his lack of minute information. The hazard would be like that of a foreigner of the twentieth century making wide-spread and various references to political affairs in the United States during the seventh decade of the nineteenth century, when he must distinguish between the jurisdiction of the supreme court and circuit court of the National Government, and that of the courts of the states and of the territories, and of the reconstructed states partially under military rule;

and must understand the distinctions between the regular army and the volunteer army and the state militia, and many other things of like character and difficulty.

For example, Sergius Paulus is called by the writer of Acts proconsul[1] in Cyprus. But Strabo had expressly stated that Cyprus was retained by the emperor for himself, in which case the governor would properly be styled proprætor.[2] Hence the old commentators (the learned Grotius among them) felt themselves compelled to explain, in this case, a seeming inaccuracy on the part of Luke. Later researches, however, established the exactness of Luke's use of the official appellations. For Dio Cassius, while stating that Cyprus was retained at first as a prætorian province, adds that Augustus afterwards exchanged it with the senate for another province. In due time, also, a coin was discovered, struck during the reign of Claudius, and stamped with the name and authority of the *proconsul* of Cyprus, and Claudius was emperor when Paul revisited the island. So Luke was right after all, and Grotius was mistaken.

Another similar instance appears in Acts xviii. 12, where it is said that Gallio was governing as

[1] ἀνθυπάτῳ, Acts xiii. 7. [2] Strabo, xvii. 3.

proconsul in Achaia[1] when Paul was in Corinth. This, also, was during the reign of Claudius. But under the two preceding emperors, Tiberius and Caligula, Achaia was governed by proprætors. The change, as we now know, was made by Claudius, and Luke is again proved to have been more accurately informed than his critics.

The geographical and meteorological allusions are equally minute and accurate. By means of them we are able to trace Paul's journeys through extended regions in Asia Minor and Greece, and to form a very vivid picture of his several voyages. The lifelike character of the travels by sea and land during the second missionary journey are specially noteworthy, while the voyage from Cæsarea to Rome is so full of incident that volumes[2] have been written upon it by practical navigators without the discovery by them of an error either in the description of the natural phenomena or in the use of nautical terms.

The book of Acts is open to another fruitful source of critical comparison in the numerous incidental allusions of Paul's Epistles, from which

[1] ἀνθυπατεύοντος τῆς Ἀχαΐας.

[2] The Voyage and Shipwreck of Saint Paul, by James Smith, Esq., of Jordanhill, F. R. S., etc. (London, 1848 and 1856).

important portions of the history of the same periods can be constructed. This subject has been so exhaustively treated by Archdeacon Paley that a reference to his volume [1] and a single illustration are all which the limits of our space permit.

In Rom. xv. 25, 26, Paul, writing near the close of his third missionary journey from some place in Greece, says, "But now I go unto Jerusalem, ministering unto the saints. For it hath been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem." In order to find these circumstances in the book of Acts, one is compelled to read several chapters and scan carefully many incidental allusions. But if he does this with proper diligence, he will find the broad historical framework into which this condensed statement in the epistle accurately fits. Such examination will reveal that (Acts xx. 2, 3) when, during Paul's third missionary journey, he came from Macedonia to Greece, where he abode three months, he was intending to sail into Syria, but changed his mind so far as to determine to go back through Macedonia first. But nothing is said about alms.

[1] Horæ Paulinæ; or, the Truth of the Scripture History of Saint Paul, Evinced by a Comparison of the Epistles which bear his Name with the Acts of the Apostles and with One Another.

From Paul's address to Felix (Acts xxiv. 17–19) we incidentally learn, however, that his object in visiting Jerusalem at that time was to bring alms to his nation, and offerings. On turning to 1 Cor. xvi. 1–4 and 2 Cor. viii. 1–4, ix. 2, also, one will find distinct incidental references by Paul to collections which he was soliciting at this particular time in Macedonia and Achaia for the saints in Jerusalem. One needs but to examine this and the many other examples of undesigned coincidences existing between the Acts and Paul's epistles to be convinced both of the genuineness of the longer epistles ascribed to him and of the high historical value of the book of Acts.

After all the sharp criticism to which Luke's narrative has been subjected, no absolutely irreconcilable discrepancies have been found; but, on the contrary, all the alleged errors have, one by one, been proved to belong to the critics rather than to the author. Luke's statements respecting Quirinius and Theudas have been more difficult to explain than any others; but it has been lately demonstrated, that Luke's implication [1] that Quiri-

[1] Luke ii. 2; Acts v. 37; cf. Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews xvii. 13, 5. See the matter fully discussed in Andrews' Life of Christ (new edition), pp. 71–81, and by President Woolsey, Bibliotheca Sacra, 1870, p. 294; New Englander, 1869, pp. 677–680.

nius was twice governor of Syria is possibly, and indeed probably, correct; while the apparent conflict between Luke and Josephus respecting the date of Theudas's insurrection is readily enough explained upon the natural supposition that there were two Theudases, as we know there were four Simons, and three Judases within the space of half a century, all of whom were guilty of rebellion.

Upon this whole matter we can do no better than to quote the words of the late President Woolsey.[1] In concluding his discussion of Luke's alleged anachronism respecting Quirinius' governorship in Syria, this weighty and judicious authority avers that if we accept Zumpt's well-supported theory that Quirinius was twice governor of Syria, no statement of Luke "remains unsolved, at least, not capable of a probable solution, except that about Theudas, which, if incorrect, is monstrously so, involving an anachronism of more than a generation, and therefore less likely to prove in the end an historical error. On the other hand, the difficulty found in a Lysanias, tetrarch of Abilene, when John the Baptist began his ministry, has been dispersed; the doubtful city of Lasea, which some would cast out of the text, has disclosed its

[1] New Englander, 1869, Oct.

site to the explorers of Crete; Sergius Paulus is a proconsul in official style, though never having attained to the dignity of a consul; the Adriatic Sea had already extended its name beyond the Iapygian promontory, as we learn from Josephus and others; and so we might go on to give examples of Luke's very nice knowledge, as where he calls the magistrates of Thessalonica *politarchs*, a rare name which an inscription verifies.

"Contrast Luke's accuracy with that of some of his commentators. He carries Paul to a river outside of Philippi, where the Jews had a place of prayer. This river was the Strymon, says De Wette, and Meyer, and more than one of the most respectable of the German ecclesiastical historians. But it was not the Strymon, and that stream was twenty miles distant from Philippi. Now if a laborious German commentator, if a prince among commentators, as we may call Meyer, has made such a blunder, with all the maps and travels of modern times within his reach, not discovering his mistake in his second edition, even after Hackett and Howson had furnished the correction, we may pardon the mistake, for we make worse ones; but we ought certainly to rate the more highly an ancient writer who

shows unusual carefulness and minuteness of investigation. Such a writer's authority ought to go some length towards freeing him from the imputation of a gross mistake about Theudas or of those found by some modern critics in our text concerning Quirinius, if there are possible solutions which can save his credit."

It is important to dwell on this habitual accuracy of Luke touching points which can be verified, that we may determine the confidence which it is safe to repose in him concerning matters which do not admit of verification; for much of the history of Acts and a considerable portion of his Gospel are beyond all direct means of verification. Confidence in his reports of the addresses given by Stephen, Peter, Paul, and others rests largely upon his general reputation for accuracy. They are, however, incidentally confirmed by the fact that in all cases Luke's reports correspond with the known characteristics of Peter and Paul as revealed in their acknowledged writings, and in other addresses attributed to them; while the lifelike character of all of Luke's narratives is such as to give overwhelming circumstantial confirmation of their genuineness and authenticity. A single instance, by way of illustration, must suffice.

In the 21st, 22d, and 23d chapters of Acts there is a detailed account of Paul's arrest at Jerusalem and of his defence before the Jews. From this account we learn that through the enmity of the Jews, Paul was mobbed in the streets of Jerusalem, and his life was saved by the chief captain of the Roman guard, who interfered, but who, not content with dispersing the mob, actually arrested Paul, and bound him with two chains, and brought him into the castle, and gave orders to have him scourged. These orders were so far executed that Paul was already tied up with the thongs, ready for the scourging, when he made known the fact that he was a freeborn Roman citizen. This frightened the chief captain, for he had already gone beyond the limits of his authority over a Roman citizen, and committed a crime of no mean character in the sight of the Roman law. A day or two later when he sent Paul down to Cæsarea for safe keeping, he forwarded a letter to Felix giving the reasons for sending the prisoner down. The letter is an interesting illustration of the unconscious efforts which a guilty man will make to put forward the best side of his case without telling a direct falsehood. In the letter Claudius Lysias says that Paul had been seized by the

Jews "and was about to be slain of them, when I came upon them with the soldiers and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman" (Acts xxiii. 27). The letter deftly conceals his own unlawful act in binding Paul, and the whole communication is so natural and lifelike that one can with the greatest difficulty doubt that it is the original form of the document which is preserved.

And so, taking it altogether, the book of Acts is, with the exception of the Gospels, the most remarkable historical document that has ever been written by man. Though no longer than some single anniversary addresses, it reviews the thirty most critical years of church history in such a way as at once to excite the interest of the dullest reader, and to satisfy the demands of the profoundest historian. In a series of lively anecdotes and brief but graphic descriptions, a story is told of such broad outlines, precise statements, and variegated colors that, when combined with the epistles of Paul, we have the whole history of the planting and training of the early churches, with chronological and geographical data in abundance to determine its relation to the progress of contemporaneous events.

Considerable portions of Luke's Gospel depend

upon his testimony alone. Almost the entire sections from the 13th to the 18th chapter are peculiar to it. Here are to be found the parables of the Lost Sheep, the Prodigal Son, the Unjust Steward, the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Importunate Widow, and the Pharisee and Publican. But more important than these are the first two chapters, which, standing by themselves, and relating to subjects peculiarly provocative of scepticism, specially demand the support which they can receive from Luke's high reputation for carefulness of investigation and accuracy of statement.

The appearance of the angel to Zacharias, foretelling the birth of John contrary to all natural laws; a similar announcement to Mary of Jesus' birth, and the heavenly portents accompanying it at Bethlehem, not only depend on Luke's statement alone, but are facts for which it is so difficult to obtain evidence, that many are inclined to regard the stories as apocryphal, and all are at times puzzled to know on what authority Luke has recorded them. But from Luke's general reputation for thoroughness of research, we may rest satisfied that these statements, like all those of his whose foundation we have opportunity to examine, are made upon due authority. Unless the belief of the

early Christians in these facts had been established beyond criticism, we may be sure that Luke would not have recorded them. The objection to them, on account of their supernatural character, vanishes in the light of the subsequent miracles of Christ's ministry, and especially of his resurrection.

Such a beginning as Luke ascribes to the earthly life of Christ, harmonizes perfectly with both the unfolding and the ending of our Lord's earthly career; while the appropriateness and reserve of the narrative are such as to exclude all theories of fraud and delusion. In the apocryphal Gospels we have ample opportunity to see into what vagaries regarding this mysterious portion of the Saviour's life the unrestrained imagination will run. They have crowded the years of Christ's childhood full of meaningless portents and miracles, while Luke has contented himself with the fewest possible sketches, and these so dignified, beautiful, and full of meaning that they command the perpetual admiration of the world, and form the most fitting possible proem to the earthly history of the world's Redeemer.

We are safe, therefore, in saying that Luke is without peer among historical writers. He is painstaking without being prolix, most accurate in

statement at the same time that he is vivid in his portraiture of details, and able to describe the sublimest life which has yet appeared in the world, and the origin and growth of the most powerful intellectual, moral, and social force which has ever entered society, in a narrative unrivalled for the purity of its diction, the completeness of its characterizations, the sublimity of its conceptions, and the permanency of the interest which it is able to excite among all classes and conditions of men. If one is disposed to think that this is the accomplishment of an historian of extraordinary powers without the special aid of Divine Providence, he will find this harder to believe than is the ordinary doctrine of inspiration.

THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

XVII.

THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

By PROF. RUSH RHEES, A.M.
Of the Newton Theological Institution.

THERE are few of us who would care to scrutinize with an artist's impartial eye, supposing that we had the artist's skill, the face which is dear because of years of fellowship and help, and beautiful with love and loveliness. Most of us feel a like disinclination to any critical treatment of the Gospel of John. All the associations and ministries of years resent any desecration of a thing so dear to the religious life and precious to religious thought; and the attitude of "disinterestedness" which Matthew Arnold fairly demands as essential to literary criticism, seems an affront to these sacred interests. Yet, though the ground whereon we stand is holy, criticism need wage no war with reverence. The dear face may be the dearer for a loving scrutiny, because thus better known. And literary inquiries are essential to any fair

estimate of the Fourth Gospel. The religious interest, to be sure, may in one sense be careless of the literary question. It prizes the picture of the Master and treasures his words and comfortable teachings. Be this portrait what it may, the original which inspired it cannot have been less winsome and masterful. Yet the book is from an ancient time, written for a foreign people, to whom other scenes, ideas, and customs were familiar than we know to-day. Hence the literary inquiry, "What is this Gospel?" can only serve to bring greater vividness to the picture already dear and a better understanding of words already loved, as it leads to better acquaintance with the writer and his work, while the theological teachings of the book are in so unique form that a just understanding of them is possible only when we justly appreciate the piece of literature which preserves them.

This literary question is not concerned with the writer's style, though that has the charm of fine simplicity, such simplicity as indicates confident familiarity with its subject. It is the simplicity of greatness. It is also the simplicity of the Hebrew habit of thought, to which it is more natural to observe facts and infer truth from them than it is

to draw conclusions from propositions. Not that conclusions are wanting here. The whole purpose of the book is to lead to a conclusion, — "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ." But the conclusions are commonly inferences from experience. "This is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; *for* their deeds were evil."

Further, our question has not to do with the structure of the book in the sense in which the poetic form of the Psalms invites study. The simplicity which characterizes the style characterizes also the structure. Part succeeds part, paragraph follows paragraph, with such transitions as "on the morrow," "and the third day," "after this," "after these things." All is unstudied and direct.

Of bits of beauty the book is full. It is needful only to instance the parable of the Good Shepherd; the love, forgetting its own exceeding sorrow, which said "Let not your heart be troubled;" the golden word, "For God so loved the world;" the winsome picture of the meeting at Jacob's well; the sturdy loyalty of him who knew one thing, "whereas I was blind, now I see;" the Master washing his disciples' feet, and later pleading with his foes, "If ye seek me, let these go their way;"

the love for his mother overcoming the agony of the cross; the reinstatement of the thrice-denying Peter for his love's sake. Men never will forget that confession of self-effacing loyalty, "He must increase, but I must decrease." There is unfathomable pathos in Jesus' reproach, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life." What tenderness was that which pleaded, "Reach hither thy finger and see my hands . . . and be not faithless, but believing"! These and many other words as fine in beauty as they are religiously elevating and comforting, show how full a literary treasure-house this gospel is. Yet the Gospel is something other than a vehicle for such gems of thought. They lie scattered about in it with profuse carelessness, telling of the richness of the thought and life which bear such fruit. We note them, therefore, delight in them, and pass on to the fundamental question, What type of literature have we in this Gospel, so simple in style and fine in thought? How are we to classify it so as most fully to understand its thought and appreciate its power?

The answer at first seems simple enough. The book is a record of a life and death recited in order to win love for its hero. In other words, it is a biography, one of the four records of the life

of Jesus of Nazareth. Strictly, however, this answer is inadequate. What does John tell of Jesus' birth and early training? Or, if attention is purposely confined to the official life of Jesus, where is the record of the baptism and official call? Can the incidental allusion to it by John the Baptist suffice? Where is the temptation? Where is the rich ministry in Galilee with its cures and sermon and parables, and the ardent multitudes who actually furnished the majority of Jesus' loyal followers? Where is the transfiguration, so suitable, we should suppose, to the author's confessed purpose in writing? Still more puzzling, if the book is a biography, is the silence touching the Lord's Supper and the agony in Gethsemane. It can hardly be urged that the writer wished to supplement, not duplicate, the Gospels already current, for then we have to account for his repetition of the story of the feeding of the multitude and for much of his record of Passion week. His purpose is not at all the biographer's, it is more didactic. He is quite aware that his record is incomplete: "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book."[1] He wrote his partial record in order by it to fix

[1] John xx. 30.

in his readers' hearts a simple practical conviction about his Master, — "These are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in his name."[1]

If then the Gospel was not meant to be a biography, is it to be thought of as a theological discussion? This is a very customary conclusion. The opening verses of the Gospel are profoundly theological. They tell of the pre-existence of the Christ, in which estate, being of the same nature with God, he was in fellowship with him, and from the beginning was his spokesman, creating, and then enlightening and vivifying the world. Hence the name given him in this exalted relation was *the Word*.[2] Not only do these propositions introduce the Gospel, but its narratives are full of equally transcendent teachings, by Jesus himself or by his evangelist concerning him. Jesus, as his teachings are here reported, repeatedly refers to a heavenly life with God, from the enjoyment of which he *came down* to earth to bring life to men, and to which he would return to receive again the glory

[1] John xx. 31.

[2] A translation of Logos (Λόγος). Hence the doctrine of these verses (i. 1–18) is known as the doctrine of the Logos.

which was his before the world was. He claims unhesitatingly to be the life, the light of the world. So, although the phrase, *the Word*, does not occur in this sense in the Gospel after the first fourteen verses, the doctrine is found throughout.

But, true as these things are, the Fourth Gospel is no more a theological treatise than it is a biography. Profoundly theological it assuredly is,— even as it is full of biographical material of rare value. But when it is remembered that the arrangement is the simplest chronological one, with no attempt to group doctrines or associate different utterances of the same teaching, it must appear that if it is an argument, it is very awkwardly put together.

The only foundation for this idea that the Gospel is a theological writing lies in an interpretation which finds that the evangelist in the first eighteen verses has announced his theses — the doctrine of the Logos — and that all that follows is meant to establish these theses. It has already been noted that the narratives are full of teachings essentially the same as are set forth in the prologue. But it must also be noticed that in the narratives the evangelist reports Jesus as teaching these things about himself, and that when John comments on his

Lord's nature and mission, while he uses language very like that found in his prologue, he nowhere again makes like use of the term, *the Word*. Not only so, but that phrase is used by him elsewhere in the Gospel, with perfect unconcern, for the common conception of the message of God to men.

Now it is known that in Alexandria in the first century a type of theological and philosophical thinking was common among Jews and later among Christians, which made use of the expression, *the Word*, in a highly metaphysical sense. Moreover, all the propositions which are found in the first five verses of John can be duplicated in the writings of Philo, the greatest of this Alexandrian school. Furthermore it is known that Ephesus in those days was intimately associated with Alexandria intellectually. The conclusion is often drawn, therefore, that the author of our Gospel was a disciple of this Alexandrian school, and that his record of the life of Jesus is colored to meet the demands of his speculative thought. As to the author's type of mind some things are to be remarked anon. Here the significant thing is the fact already noted that the Logos doctrine is used by the author only in his introductory verses, while when he reports from Jesus essentially the same

teachings as are found in the prologue, or utters them on his own account, an altogether different form of expression seems natural to him. The Gospel is full of profoundest teachings about Jesus. But they are matters of fact which have come into the writer's experience or convictions reached by him after meditating on such facts of his experience, not at all parts of a metaphysical system to which he has committed himself. But apparently he was writing for men to whom the Alexandrian metaphysics were familiar and attractive; and finding them continually talking about a Logos, with somewhat hazy conceptions of his nature and functions, he opens his book with an appropriation of many of their propositions as true to the facts he had learned about his Master, and he adds the new proposition which is not only new but contradictory to their metaphysics, and is at the same time the corner stone of all his own thought: "*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory.*"

So while the book is profoundly didactic and is the richest source for our knowledge of the nature of Christ, it is not a theology in any sense commonly asserted of it, any more than it is in any adequate sense a biography.

But if neither biography nor theology, what then? Recall how the evangelist himself describes his work,— a selection of scenes from his Lord's life, recounted in order to produce a practical and controlling impression on the hearts of his readers. And then consider how the personality of the author pervades the whole narrative, not obtrusively, but as the individuality of the virtuoso pervades his rendering of another's music, Beethoven's or Chopin's. The book is full of details which have no appreciable significance for the life of Jesus nor any appreciable bearing on the argument for his Messiahship and Saviourhood. We are told that it was the tenth hour when Andrew and another came for the first time into fellowship with the new Master, — a matter of no concern to the evangelist's readers of any century, but of momentous interest to those two. He remarks that John the Baptist's first testimony was delivered at an otherwise unknown Bethany beyond Jordan, that his later confession was at Ænon near to Salim, that the pool of Bethesda had five porches full of sick folk, that it was Lazarus's sister Mary who anointed the Lord in Bethany. These and many like details have small significance for a biography, none at all for a Christological argument; but they are naturally

characteristic of a memory dwelling lovingly on the experiences of a momentous youth. They give the impression of abundance of resource; the evangelist could have told much more and told it more fully had he wished. Some of the details are clearly for the reader's benefit, that he may understand more fully. Some of them show that the writer has been carried back into the past, and a far-away-ness, like the absent look in loved eyes when early days come to mind, pervades the words. True, every such touch of unstudied reality serves to bring more vividly before the readers the scenes which fill the evangelist's heart. Biography could have no more priceless material, argument no more convincing evidence. But these are not studied data nor conscious argument. They are little marks telling of the vividness of that inner picture from which the evangelist draws for the comfort and admonition of a later day.

The author's personality appears also in the comments and explanations which he often inserts in his narratives. Most commonly these seek to help his readers, — as when he explains Jewish terms or customs which would be unfamiliar to them, or notes that some of Jesus' doings and sayings were not understood by his disciples until after the res-

urrection, or explains some of Jesus' words by referring to his superhuman knowledge. Now and then, however, after some most exalted word of Jesus, or high testimony to him, the comments carry us away from the simple record and into the inner chambers of the disciple's soul, to share his deepest contemplations. As we pass from Jesus' heavenly teaching of Nicodemus to those dear words, "For God so loved the world,"[1] we are withdrawn from that upper room with its dim lights and eager inquirer, and listen to the meditations of a soul completely mastered by the Lord of his youth, and wont to contemplate with love and adoration the meaning of that life and death.

Consider further the unconcern with which the evangelist passes over long gaps in his record of Jesus' life. Between the events of the sixth chapter and the seventh, a whole summer has elapsed. All of the rich ministry in Galilee which is recorded in our other Gospels is omitted here, excepting the single incident of the Master's compassion on the hungry multitude. Yet, as has already been no-

[1] It is now widely held that verses 16 to 21 of chapter iii., while they may follow lines of thought derived from Jesus, in their present form are a comment of the evangelist. Note the past tenses in verses 18 and 19. In the same way verses 31 to 36 are a comment on John the Baptist's testimony.

ticed, the structure of the book is most simply chronological. Evidently it has not occurred to the writer that these gaps and omissions would cause remark. Had he planned a biography he could not have written as he has, unless he himself were ill-informed. But his purpose being to establish a conviction concerning his Master, he seems to have let his thought wander over those blessed years and select such scenes and teachings as would best serve him, — perchance the scenes and teachings that had come to have deepest interest for his own heart as year after year he contemplated the days so full of love and awe when he leaned on Jesus' breast. Possibly his complete omission of most that the other evangelists have recorded may have been due in part to a wish to supplement them and show how far from complete they are as records, notwithstanding their effectiveness as portraitures of Jesus. This however, if it had any influence with him, was plainly secondary. His first purpose was to set before his readers those scenes in his Master's life which after all the lapse of years most moved him and seemed most suitable to stablish the faith of others.

There is a like air of retrospect in the descriptive title the evangelist uses for himself, "the disciple

whom Jesus loved." If we could think of it as used with anything of pride or self-congratulation, it would at once become utterly odious to us. But as it occurs in the Gospel it suggests rather the disciple's absorbing recollection of a heavenly intimacy. It is not difficult to conceive how one admitted to such an intimacy would be so lifted above regard for human fame that the thought of what others would find in his chosen self-description would not occur to him. It draws attention to the Master rather than to the disciple. He is absorbed in his devotion to a Lord who gives his life its only worth for himself or for others. Finding a need for a fresh testimony to his Master's life and mission, a need arising from peculiar conditions of life and thought in what seemed to him the last days, he collected and wrote down for the aid of wavering faith some of his personal reminiscences of those great and blessed years.

As he gave utterance to his thoughts, the power of that past sometimes took full possession of him, and the scenes are reproduced with all the vividness of the first event. But they are not mere reproductions of the past; they are recollections of an active mind which had been busy for years with contemplation of those days of fellowship with Je-

sus, and meditation on the meaning of them, in the light of later experiences of the overmastering influence and transforming power of the Crucified and Risen One. They show us the picture of that ministry not completely but in detached scenes, those as we have seen that had come to have chief significance for the disciple as the years rolled on. They show us the picture not in the glare of midday, but with the softer light of the afternoon upon it, throwing the lesser parts into shadow and bringing out with clear distinctness lines and relations which are often missed in the light of the earlier day.

The Gospel is thus neither biography nor strictly argument, but a *cluster of reminiscences* drawn from a memory rich with many such treasures, and set in the light of knowledge won from the experience and the contemplation of years, with the purpose that by such a lifting up of his Master the disciple might fix men's eyes and hearts upon him.

Such reminiscences reveal quite incidentally the personality of him who offers them. The fact that with a naïve self-effacement he could name himself as the special intimate of his Lord, and that he could give us just that picture of his Master, so unapproachably glorious and exalted as we have

it in his Gospel, will always constitute his chief distinction. He is the one of the apostles who saw deeply enough into his Lord's meaning, and thought profoundly enough on his Lord's nature, to preserve his fullest self-declarations and suggest the loftiest interpretation of him. Interpretation is the proper term, for, passing by the prologue as not characteristic of the evangelist's thought, he gives no evidence of being naturally of a speculative mind. He loves to dwell on fact, on matters of his own and others' experience. "He that hath seen hath borne witness" is his characteristic declaration. "We beheld his glory . . . of his fulness we all received," he writes touching the incarnate Logos. His habit of thought is truly objective, he leans on facts more than on ideas. True, facts are only significant as they relate to spiritual things. The spirit world is to him the only ultimate reality. His assurance concerning it, however, is not an intuition, but an experience; as he puts it elsewhere, "that which we have seen with our eyes . . . and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life . . . declare we unto you."[1] To him — as to Paul — the unseen things had objective reality, and could overmaster the mind and absorb the heart.

[1] 1 John i. 1, 3.

For him that unseen world had had one clear manifestation, — "the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal *life*, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."[1] He is a man mightily controlled by an influence from without himself. He thinks with that influence ever in mind. Life and death for him consist simply in the soul's relation to his Master. His heart's home is in that Master's bosom still. His deepest longing is that men may know and trust his Lord and find their deathless life in him. "To me" Browning truly makes him say —

> "To me that story — ay, that Life and Death
> Of which I wrote 'it was' — to me, it is;
> — Is, here and now: I apprehend naught else."[2]

[1] 1 John i. 2. [2] A Death in the Desert.

THE EPISTLES OF PAUL AS LITERATURE.

XVIII.

THE EPISTLES OF PAUL AS LITERATURE.

By PROF. GEORGE B. STEVENS, Ph.D., D.D.
Yale University.

THE Apostle Paul was a Greek-speaking Jew. He was born in Tarsus of Cilicia, a city which, as a centre of philosophy and literature, ranked next after Athens and Alexandria. Although his parents were strict Pharisees, he appears to have received an education which, for his time, must be considered liberal. At an early age he was sent to Jerusalem to be trained in the Rabbinical schools. There he came under the instruction and influence of the famous doctor Gamaliel, who is described in the New Testament as a man of generous temper, and in Jewish tradition as a man of extensive culture. The young Saul (as he was then called) could hardly fail to have been strongly influenced by this teacher, though the effects of this influence are not easily traced, especially in his earlier life.

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It has often been claimed that Paul was extensively acquainted with Greek literature and philosophy. In support of this opinion appeal is made to the fact that his early life was spent in the cultured Greek city of Tarsus, where, it is said, he would certainly become familiar with Greek learning. This argument is re-enforced by the tradition that Gamaliel was learned in the Greek language and literature, and by the circumstance that Paul quotes the Greek poets in his addresses and letters. This opinion, however, is an exaggerated one, and rests upon quite inadequate grounds. The strict Pharisaism of Paul's family would tend strongly to hold him aloof from any close association with the Greeks of his native city. Moreover, he probably left Tarsus when he became a "son of the law," that is, at twelve or thirteen years of age, before which time he can hardly be supposed to have become versed in Greek letters. The tradition respecting Gamaliel's culture is not to be too confidently accepted. Paul himself, in alluding to his instruction under Gamaliel, makes no reference to anything beyond a strictly Jewish training (Acts xxii. 3), and, elsewhere, in referring to his pre-Christian life, mentions his extraordinary zeal for the traditions of his fathers in such

a way as to imply that his education at Jerusalem had been intensely and exclusively Jewish. It is true that Paul knew the Greek language and could employ it with facility and power. It was, indeed, his native language. Roman citizenship had been conferred on his father or some other ancestor from whom he had inherited it (Acts xxii. 28). Greek was, therefore, without doubt, the language of his parents. But that he should know the Greek language well does not necessarily imply an acquaintance with Greek literature. A zealous Jewish family like Paul's would also preserve a knowledge of the late Hebrew or Aramaic dialect. Accordingly, we find that Paul could also speak in this tongue, as he once did in Jerusalem when he addressed the mob (who could not have understood Greek) from the temple stairs (Acts xxi. 40).

The argument from his references to Greek poets, when it is closely considered, reduces to small dimensions. There are three of these references. The first is found in his address at Athens in the passage: "For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring" (Acts xvii. 28). This phrase (*τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν*) is quoted *verbatim* from a Cilician poet, Aratus, and

closely resembles a phrase used by Cleanthes, an obscure poet who had resided at Athens. This saying, which seems to have had almost the character of a proverb, Paul might easily have heard in his boyhood, especially since its author belonged to his own native province. He appears to have known also that other Greek poets had used similar language, since he refers to "certain of" their poets as using the expression in question. But the reference to this semi-proverbial saying on Paul's part no more proves him to have been versed in Greek learning than would the quotation by some modern speaker of the words: "The proper study of mankind is man," prove him to be widely acquainted with English literature and philosophy.

The second quotation is found in 1 Corinthians xv. 33: "Evil company doth corrupt good manners" (*φθείρουσιν ἤθη χρηστὰ ὁμιλίαι κακαί*). This is an Iambic trimeter line from the "Thais" of Menander, an Athenian poet, and was doubtless a current popular proverb. As Paul uses no formula of quotation, it is not likely that he knew the source of the saying; indeed, he may not have known that it was the saying of any particular poet.

The third example is a line from a Cretan soothsayer, Epimenides, whom Paul calls a "prophet of their [the Cretans'] own," namely: "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons" (*κρῆτες ἀεὶ ψεῦσται, κακὰ θηρία, γαστέρες ἀργαί*). The Apostle refers to this popular description of the Cretans, and recognizes the truth of it, as showing their peculiar liability to the errors against which Titus is to warn them.

These considerations are important in their bearing upon the literary characteristics of Paul's writings. They show that he was not a *littérateur*, or a rhetorician. He himself admits that he is "rude in speech" (2 Corinthians xi. 6). He had received his training in Rabbinical schools, and the principal subjects of his study had been the Old Testament and the traditions which had grown up in connection with its interpretation and application.

Paul's writings are all in the form of letters. This is equivalent to saying that they are occasional writings, composed to meet some particular situation or emergency. To pure literature the Apostle never devoted himself. He was primarily a missionary and preacher, and only secondarily a writer. His letters were originally written merely

as aids to his missionary work. They refer mainly to special and local conditions. Paul could not have had any idea of the wide circulation and use which have been accorded to them in later times; much less, that they would become a part of a canon of Scripture. In their composition he builded better and greater than he knew, for although, as we have observed, his Epistles were originally but helps to his missionary work, it is a fair question whether they have not exerted a wider influence in the world than even those great and useful personal labors which they were designed to supplement.

The style of the Apostle has certain strongly marked characteristics. There is, first of all, a certain carelessness of form which is often due to the impetuous rush of his thoughts, and to his entire absorption in his subject. He does not write like a man who is always thinking of the words and phrases in which he shall express himself; he writes like one who is wholly possessed by certain ideas, of the truth of which he wishes to persuade his readers. In the "tempest, torrent, and whirlwind of his passion" his sentences are sometimes broken, and the intended order of his thoughts disturbed. Of this informal or sponta-

neous quality of Paul's writing I will give a few illustrations.

In the first chapter of Romans, after the usual salutation, he begins an intended enumeration with the word "First," as if he would proceed with "Second," and, perhaps, "Third"; but this he never does, because, apparently, his mind is diverted from the order of ideas with which he had intended to proceed. Similarly in the third chapter he raises the question whether the Jew has any real advantage, in the matter of religion, over the heathen, and answers that he has a great advantage in every respect. He then begins to enumerate the elements of this advantage, and says that, first of all, the Jewish people have been entrusted with the oracles of God (verses 1, 2). But he does not carry the enumeration any further. Out of this first consideration which he presents spring certain objections which he proceeds to answer, and he is thus diverted from the list of particulars which he seems to have had in mind, and finally turns away to another subject.

A peculiarity of style closely akin to that which has just been described is Paul's habit of "going off at a word." A convenient illustration is furnished by the opening verses of Romans. At the

mention of the gospel (verse 1), he appends a brief description of it, which leads him to mention God's Son, whom he then stops to describe both with respect to his human birth and with respect to his essential divine nature (verses 3, 4); then to this description of Christ he adds a reference to him as the source of his own apostleship and as the true object of faith (verse 5).

Sometimes a particular point in the Apostle's argument suggests to him some lofty or universal truth to which his mind suddenly mounts up and on which he dwells with sublime eloquence. A striking example is found where in discussing the Corinthian parties, Paul argues that those who enlist under the banner of Apollos, Cephas, or any other individual Christian teacher, are depriving themselves of the help which they might derive from others, whereas they should make all sources of instruction and help their own. All Christian teachers are theirs, he says, and not one alone; therefore they should profit from the help of all. At this point the thought of the greatness of the Christian's possession in general seizes upon his mind, and he suddenly exclaims: Yes, all things are yours; not only Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, but the world and life and death, things present

and things to come, all are yours, if ye are Christ's, for Christ is God's (1 Corinthians iii. 21–23).

A noticeable characteristic of Paul's style is the carrying out of a sentence or paragraph in a different way from that which its beginning seemed to contemplate (see Phil. i. 22). Sometimes he even leaves a sentence quite unfinished (see Rom. ix. 22–24). Frequently he pauses in the midst of a passage to make explanations and then resumes his original course of thought. A remarkable example of this peculiarity is seen in the famous parallel which he institutes between Adam and Christ (Rom. v. 12 *sq.*) where, having begun to state what the parallel is (verse 12), he pauses to explain the language which he had used respecting the relation of death to sin (verses 13, 14), and then resumes the comparison (verse 15). He does not, however, resume it in its original form. He had begun by stating the *resemblance* between Adam's introduction of sin and Christ's introduction of righteousness into the world; he resumes the comparison by stating the *difference* between the two cases. On this difference he dwells at some length (verses 15–17), and then resumes the comparison in its original form (verse 18). We have, then, this peculiar construction: the sen-

tence which is begun in verse 12 is finished only in the second half of verse 18. Even then the two parts of the sentence do not formally match each other. The construction may be represented thus: "Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin" (verse 12) [here intervene six verses of explanation], "even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came upon all men to justification of life." (verse 18).

The apostle is fond of the rhetorical device known as paronomasia, or play upon words. It is difficult to represent this peculiarity of style in translation. In none of the cases where paronomasia is employed is there any attempt to reproduce it in either of our English versions which are in common use. Examples are found in Romans i. 20: "The *unseen* things of him are *clearly seen*," that is, the evidences of God's being and wisdom which are invisible to the natural eye, are apparent to the eye of reason; and in Romans i. 28: "Since they did not *approve* to retain God in their knowledge, he gave them over to an *unapproved* mind." It is, however, in the one private letter of the Apostle's which has fortunately been preserved to us, that we find the fullest use made

of paronomasia. The playful use of the pun in the letter to Philemon is a touch in the picture of the Apostle's personality which we should not wish to lose. In order to appreciate the Apostle's playfulness it should be remembered that Onesimus, on whose behalf the letter was written, was Philemon's slave; that he had run away to Rome after having, in some way, defrauded his master; that he had there been converted, and was now sent back to Philemon with the letter in question, in which Paul pleads for his favorable reception; and, especially, that the name Onesimus means *profitable*. "Now," says the Apostle to his friend (verses 10, 11), "I entreat you for my spiritual child, Onesimus, who, I know, has belied his name and has proved *unprofitable*, but who will now be what his name imports, and will henceforth be really *profitable* both to thee and me." Again in verse 20 he uses the verb from which the name Onesimus is derived — the only place where it is used in the New Testament — and the play on words which he intends may be approximately represented thus: "Let me be *profited* by thee in the Lord; I have sent back your Onesimus, no longer merely a slave but a Christian brother; now prove yourself to be my Onesimus, my *profitable*,

by receiving him as such." While speaking of the humor of this charming letter, I cannot forbear to mention Paul's playful request that Philemon should charge to himself whatever Onesimus owed him, coupled with the reminder from the Apostle that he had something to his credit with his friend inasmuch as, being one of his converts, he owed to him his very self. Of course, any actual payment of the debts of Onesimus by Paul would have been as inconceivable on account of Philemon's relations and obligations to Paul, as it would have been impossible in fact on account of Paul's being a penniless Roman prisoner.

I have dwelt somewhat at length on these peculiarities of Paul's style, because they are likely to be overlooked by most readers of his Epistles. But they are, after all, but minor characteristics That which strikes the attentive student of the Apostle's writings as their most prominent quality is the vigor and intensity with which he enters into his subject. This is a quality which lies behind style, but which powerfully affects it. If his style is not marked by any special grace or smoothness, the deficiency is more than made good by the sturdy strength with which the thought pushes on to its goal. If the Apostle's arguments are not

cast into the forms which the Greek schools would have approved, they are nevertheless based upon strong grounds which are not easily shaken. It will commonly be found that the real strength of his reasoning does not lie in the formal construction of syllogisms, but in the secure truths of Revelation and the undeniable facts of man's religious nature which underlie his arguments.[1]

It was inevitable that the Jewish education of the Apostle should impose certain limitations upon his mode of viewing religious subjects and upon his methods of conducting his arguments. The most conspicuous example of such limitation is seen in his use of the allegorical method of interpreting Scripture, — a method in constant use and in high esteem in the Rabbinical schools in which Paul was trained. This allegorical method of argument it is necessary briefly to illustrate.

In Galatians iv. 21–31 the Apostle uses the relations of Sarah and Hagar to Abraham, and the history of these two women and of their descendants, to illustrate the nature and relations to each other of the Old and New Testaments. This he does, not simply by showing that there is a certain

1 For a study of Paul's modes of thought I would refer the reader to my "Pauline Theology," Chapter II.

suggestive resemblance or analogy between this ancient history and the subject under discussion, but by maintaining that the relations of these women to Abraham actually signify the freedom of the gospel and the bondage of the law respectively. Sarah is a free woman, and with Isaac her son, born in fulfilment of a divine promise, is the type of the new Covenant whose characteristic is freedom. Hagar is a bondwoman, and with her son Ishmael, who was born in mere carnal relations, is a type of the law-system whose effect is bondage. That Sarah and Isaac represent the dispensation of promise and freedom it is not difficult to maintain because of the special promise of God respecting the birth of Isaac; but that Hagar represents the Old Testament system is not so easily shown. This identification the Apostle makes out in one of two ways, according to the reading which is followed in verse 25. According to the text of the Revised Version, he identifies Hagar with the Old Testament thus: In Arabia the people apply to Mt. Sinai the name "Hagar." Now Sinai is the symbol of the Old Testament system (as Jerusalem also is); hence "Hagar" really designates Jerusalem, the seat and centre of the Old Covenant, and thus signifies

that which is most characteristic of that covenant, —bondage. If the text which is followed in the margin of the Revised Version be adopted, the argument is: Hagar represents the Old Testament system with its characteristics and effects, because Mt. Sinai (the symbol of that system) is situated in Arabia, the land of Hagar's descendants. In the one case the identification of Hagar with the Old Testament is based upon a linguistic coincidence; in the other upon a geographical one. The latter is more probably the form in which Paul worked out the idea. Either mode of argument seems very strange to one not trained in the allegorical modes of interpretation which were universal in the Rabbinical schools. Two remarks are here in place: (1) that Paul uses this method of argument with surprising reserve, and (2) that the validity of his conclusions is, in no case, dependent upon the allegorical arguments by which he seeks to support them. These arguments are, as Luther says, but the painting of the house *after it has been built*. The strength of his arguments will be found, not in their formal aspects, but in their firm grasp on fundamental truths, and in the clear perception of important distinctions and of real relations which they evince.

Finally, Paul must be regarded as, above all things, a passionate writer. Intense feeling glows in his letters. He can persuade, comfort, or denounce, as the case requires. He can employ the weapons of satire and sarcasm, and many of his passages are pervaded by a subtle and stinging irony. He is capable of intense indignation and scorn. "But," as a distinguished scholar says, "the softest tones of the mind are likewise at his disposal; the ebullition of righteous anger softens down to the most touching expression of heartfelt love; he can speak the language of deeply-wounded love, as well as of most ardent longing; of exulting gratitude, as well as of suppressed pain." [1]

Of this mingling of conflicting feelings we have the most striking examples in the Corinthian letters. It seemed to be a question for the Apostle whether the peculiar conditions at Corinth called most for indignation or for pity. Fanatical opposition and jealousy of himself, gross sensuality, divisions, ignorance of the true nature of the gospel, superficial moral training, and bad habits, — these conditions gave rise to opposing feelings. In speaking of 2 Corinthians Dean Stanley well

[1] Weiss; Introduction to the New Testament, i. 212.

defines the mingling of emotions to which I here refer and the effect of it upon the style of the Epistle, when he says: "The three objects of the Epistle are, in point of arrangement, kept distinct. But so vehement were the feelings under which he wrote, that the thankful expression of the first part is darkened by the indignation of the third; and the directions about the business of the contribution are colored by the reflections both of his joy and of his grief. And in all the three portions, though in themselves strictly personal, the Apostle is borne away into the higher regions in which he habitually lived." [1]

[1] Epistles to the Corinthians, pp. 348, 349.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

XIX.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

By the REV. SAMUEL T. LOWRIE, D.D.
Philadelphia, Pa.

THE Epistle to the Hebrews challenges attention to its literary qualities. It is evident at once that it has a cultured style and literary form. Other New Testament writings show the same combination, but in inferior degrees. The earliest trace of attention to these qualities of our Epistle appears in Origen, who praised the excellence of its Greek diction and of its composition. The first importance of such excellence is, that the author who shows it may be taken himself as an authority for what he teaches, apart from the convincing way in which he conveys his instruction. Origen ascribed this importance to what he so remarked in our Epistle, and for him it was the chief importance of such merit. But he was also influenced by this excellence of style to discredit the common belief that Paul was the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and so started a debate that has continued to the present day. This view of Ori-

gen's, which he does not himself consistently observe, has been remembered so well, that the other and greater value he attached to the literary merit of our Epistle seems to have been lost sight of. This merit has been for the most part exploited as if its only practical value were the light it sheds on the authorship of our Epistle. That is a very unhappy diversion of an important fact from its proper effect, and may be taken as a salutary warning that danger attends the present exclusive study of literary characteristics. There are other seductive diversions, besides the one just noted, that may make the study profitless. "Therefore," as the Epistle says about its own themes, "we ought to give the more earnest heed to these things, lest haply we drift away."

The Epistle comes to us as anonymous, though it did not to its first readers, as appears from the personal references with which it concludes. But though not anonymous to these latter, the Epistle abstains, not only from the usual superscription and subscription, but also from every kind of presentation of the person of the author, as fortifying what the Epistle communicates. The only personal references of the author to himself are three (xiii. 19. 22, 23), and of these

the last: "Brethren, bear with the word of exhortation," is distinctly deprecatory; as if the author felt that his readers were likely to think that he needed to excuse himself for writing at all; so little weight had his personal relation in their case.

This anonymous trait distinguishes our Epistle from every other New Testament writing. So does its literary quality. These two facts may be related. The circumstances that influenced the author to efface his person while writing, may have moved him to write with the more pains, in order, not only that the message might take effect by the cogency of its utterance, but also that it might make the impression that the author is an authority in the learning he imparts. Such is the effect of a cultured style of literary composition. The author actually achieved the highest possible success; for, without the aid of an unchallenged and great name for its author, our Epistle was recognized as a communication of the greatest authority, and was received among the canonical books of the New Testament Scriptures.

The exclusive study of its literary qualities may still promote the same effect; and such effect will be the highest reward of the study.

The literary form of a composition is necessarily determined by the public for whom it is meant. The subjects treated will be those of interest to that public; the treatment of them will be as those subjects concern that public. Our Epistle was addressed to Jewish Christians. That accounts for another trait that distinguishes it from other great Epistles of the New Testament, namely, the absence of any reference to Gentiles, and the absence of any formal statement of the doctrine of justification by faith. For Gentiles the first and pressing question is: How shall those that are not the people of God, but are sinners, be reconciled to God and become his people? The answer to that is the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ. Other Epistles, being written to Gentiles, give that answer. The Jewish question was, and is: How shall we, who are the people of God, but are sinners, draw near to God to find grace and obtain the promises? The answer to that is: Through Jesus Christ, who is Priest of a new order, and High Priest forever in heaven, and is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him. Our Epistle is that answer, with all needful amplification; yet, as the author intimates (xiii. 22), written briefly, in com-

parison with the comprehensiveness of his subject; for the Epistle was to be read in public, and all at once.

The relation of this composition to the other books of the Bible is defined by the author himself in the opening verse: "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets, . . . hath at the end of these days [of prophecy] spoken unto us in a Son." The revelation in Jesus Christ is the continuation of the stream of prophecy which in him attains its fulness. It is the revelation of salvation. But the author represents that the completeness of Jesus' prophecy was not in his personal ministry alone, but in that and in the prophetic ministry of those whom he commissioned to continue it. This appears at ii. 3, where he says: "So great salvation, which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit." With the same meaning the Gospel by Mark is entitled: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." The Epistle to the Hebrews, then, is part of the stream of prophecy at its full flood. It nowhere, indeed, gives

formal statement to that effect, as the other Epistles do, of which 1 Cor. xiv. 37 is a good example. Nevertheless the sentiment of it pervades the whole of our Epistle; and in one place it finds expression, namely, at x. 38, when the composition has finished its chief theme and also the appropriate exhortation. Then, in phrase borrowed from an Old Testament prophet, and speaking as the impersonation of the truth he has imparted, and with all its authority, the author says: "But my righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrink back, my soul hath no pleasure in him."

Present space precludes more than brief mention of some of the rhetorical traits of the Epistle. Its stately, sonorous beginning, very striking in the Greek, and not wholly dissipated in the English translation, lures one to the reading in expectation of more beauties. It would be easy to produce examples of the richness of the Epistle in rhetorical respects, the only embarrassment being what to select. It should be noticed, however, that metaphor, comparison, antithesis, occur but sparingly. There are hardly more than fourteen metaphors or comparisons. Only three of these are drawn from Gentile customs; all the rest are drawn from Old Testament sources, and to be

understood must be traced there, — a fact of considerable importance for right interpretation.

A more important matter of rhetoric is, to note how the author uses direct statement and dramatic representation. This occurs much after the type of the Old Testament prophets; and the trait helps the effort to classify the literary relation of the composition. The most considerable and striking instance of what is now referred to is found in the first chapter. This begins with four verses of statement in dignified phrase such as might introduce a high and solemn function. Then follow nine verses of dramatic representation. The whole concludes with a verse that sums up and defines the impression intended to be made. The four verses introduce the *dramatis personæ* of the chapter, the Father, the Son and angels. The Son is the central person, and his mission is briefly described: "When he had made purification of sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." The purpose is to exhibit the Son as revealing and doing God's will concerning men, and, as such, an agent greater and better for men than angels. This is done by successive scenes wherein God's manner to his Son is contrasted with his manner toward angels. Scrip-

ture language is borrowed for this, and used in the author's own artistic manner. The representation is Scriptural; not, however, by virtue of the proof found in the passages cited, as study of the efforts of commentators to find such proof will show; but in the single impression the author would make by his representation, — namely, that the Son is for men a better agent than angels in respect to the will of God that he came to do.

Let the reader follow the representation, and observe the intimate, direct, and confidential relations of the Father and the Son, and God's paternal purpose of royal glory for the Son; and, on the other hand, the distant and humble relation of the angels, and the indirect address to them in the third person, and he will feel that the intended impression is made, and that the thing is admirably done. That the author uses Scripture language instead of his own, is only consistent with the dictates of poetic taste, of which many other compositions give examples. Other instances of such dramatic representation are ii. 12, 13; v. 5, 6; x. 5–7, 37, 38. In one impressive passage, xii. 18–27, appears a dramatic representation composed of the author's own language and Scripture language combined, that sets a scene truly grand and full of action.

It is obvious that the literary trait just mentioned must greatly affect the meaning of the passages where it appears. Hence the importance of noticing it.

The logic, or argumentation, of the Epistle is one of its most noticeable characteristics. It is so full of argument compared with other writings, that is, so full of separate and distinct allegations in proof of what it affirms, that one may easily miss noting their number, and thus see only one or two where there are three or five. A good illustration is vii. 4–9, where five distinct Scriptural facts are cited in proof of the superiority of Christ's Melchizedekian order of priesthood to the Levitical order. Present space does not admit of further illustration of this trait, nor of the still more important fact of the cogency of the author's reasoning in each instance taken alone.

But it is important to notice the elements or factors with which the author reasons, especially as an erroneous prejudice on that subject exists in some quarters. The author himself states those factors when he says: "Ye have need that some one teach you the elements of the beginning of the oracles of God" (v. 12). By that he means divinely revealed things recorded in the beginning

of the Old Testament Scriptures. Accordingly he reasons exclusively from facts recorded in the Pentateuch, confronting them with the accepted facts of the Christian confession as they were professed by himself and his readers. His use of later Scripture (Ps. xcv.; Ps. cx.; Jer. xxxi. 31–34) is only of such as is essentially linked with the facts of the Pentateuch that he uses. His use of Scriptural language in dramatic way, as noted above, does not belong here. The conclusions from his argumentation are mostly the obvious import of the facts when so confronted, and are often only the reproduction of conclusions stated in the Scriptural record itself. Negatively, and this with reference to the prejudice above mentioned, it should be noted, that not a single metaphysical statement or inference appears anywhere in the Epistle. The notorious "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened," etc. (vi. 4–8), though often treated as if it were metaphysical, is only a statement in the abstract of an historical situation already described (iii. 7–19), namely, a situation where God did not permit a generation of Israel that provoked Him to enter into a better knowledge of His ways. What vi. 4–8 expresses is, that what so occurred may occur again, where

men, instead of learning and doing God's will, provoke him. The reason for failure is not metaphysical, but that God will not permit the doing (vi. 3). Also iv. 12, 13, "For the word of God is living and active," etc., has been treated as if it were a metaphysical representation of the effect of God's word on the conscience. The passage has even been claimed as supporting Trichotomy, whereas it only reflects an Old Testament manner of treating human spirit as having members and parts like the body. The passage descriptively declares the unerring aim and executive power of God's word as an executioner's sword, where guilt has incurred the blow of judgment.

This Epistle, therefore, affords no ground for alleging, that when Christianity came in contact with the Greek mind, it was seized with a metaphysical tendency, and changing from Oriental to Western philosophy, it wrought out what are called the fundamental Christian doctrines. Most of these doctrines are exhibited in the Epistle to the Hebrews exclusively out of Old Testament and Jewish sources. It is observed that Paul's Epistle to the Romans and his epistles to other Gentile churches exhibit the same truths, and others necessarily involved in them, with such identity as to

the doctrine as to contribute to the belief that Paul was the author of Hebrews. That is proof that Western philosophy did not modify these doctrines, and had nothing to do with working them out in the sense of originating them. If it is observed, that in apostolic writings addressed to Gentiles, these doctrines are wrought out metaphysically in a way congenial to the literature of the people addressed, the proper inference is, that the Apostles of an original revelation were masterfully subjecting Western philosophy and making it tributary to revealed truth, as they labored to make everything bow the knee to Christ. Peter wrote to Greek-speaking Gentiles: "Ye were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers" (1 Pet. i. 18, 19). He meant their false philosophies as well as their idolatries.

In respect to the important matter of arrangement that gives the higher unity of the composition, while it is obvious that the Epistle produces a succession of topics, and that there is movement, and that a goal is reached marking a satisfactory conclusion, it is not easily seen that there is a perfect unity in the composition, and that it is characterized by order and steady progress, without

diversion or repetition. The transitions are plain in the great divisions, but are difficult to detect in the sub-divisions. Usually, in both instances, they are announced by sentences that are at once the conclusion of what has just preceded and the introduction of what follows. We notice in the arrangement of this composition a likeness to the functions appointed for Jewish feasts. As has been said, the Epistle begins with dignified, sonorous diction and statement like the introduction of a solemn service. It proceeds with a movement that sometimes takes on dramatic representation, and the progress of thought produces an effect like a succession of incidents. The readers are like an audience that observes a minister and notes the successive acts and incidents of his ministration, which are linked together much as the topics of this Epistle are, in the way already stated. The author reasons from material derived from the Pentateuch. But he actually draws nearly all that material from that concrete representation of it that appeared in the solemnities of the Great Day of Atonement, instituted Lev. xvi. The nearest likeness of our Epistle is to the ritual of that occasion. In the elaboration of the chief subject of our Epistle, namely, viii. 1–x. 18, it is evident

that the matter corresponds closely to the incidents of the High-Priestly functions in the Holiest on that day. The exigencies of the argument may sufficiently account for that. But as the argument does not compel such arrangement, it may be that the author voluntarily conforms to that order as good for giving unity to his discourse. If then a survey of the whole Epistle shows traces of the same thing, that is, if there appears an arrangement that corresponds to the successive stages of the ritual for that Great Day of Atonement, we may take that as the clue to the higher unity of the whole Epistle.

It comports with experience that literary form should be derived in such a way. Religious ritual everywhere and at all times has been influential in moulding literary form. Wherever the Christian pulpit has dominated intellectual life, there serious discourse, whether spoken or written, takes some of the form of the sermon. In a similar and very free way our author may have conformed the arrangement of his Epistle to the incidents of Lev. xvi., or to the solemnities of the Day of Atonement as they were familiar to himself and his readers. That would fit the mental habit of his readers in contemplating the great subjects he

would present, and would borrow impressiveness in their presentation from the solemn associations of rites that were still observed. For this Epistle was written while the Temple and its services still existed.

According to this idea of its composition, the Epistle to the Hebrews appears as a discourse liturgical in spirit and arrangement. It states, affirms, explains, argues, exhibits, exhorts; but it does all these as in view of transactions of a solemn function. The transactions are present as there in the Mosaic record Lev. xvi. We may, then, take that chapter and collate with it the whole of our Epistle, as Prof. R. G. Moulton has so happily done with 2 Sam. vi. 12–19, and Ps. xxx.; Ps. xxiv.; Ps. cxxxii.; Ps. ci., — and we shall have a similar effect. If doing so does not convince the reader that he has caught the real clue of the present composition, it will at least give a good clue by which to follow and appreciate the real unity of the Epistle, and also be an aid to memory. And till he gets a better, it will afford him the nearest approximation to the author's mental prospect while writing the Epistle.

The following table of contents of the Epistle exhibits the arrangement according to the ideal found in Lev. xvi.

LEVITICUS XVI.	EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.
I.	
Ver. 3. The High Priest at the Sanctuary to make atonement, according to the law ordained through angels (Gal. iii. 19).	I. 1–14. Jesus Christ, Son of God, who has made purification of sins, an agent of God's will greater than angels and better for men.
II.	
Ver. 5, 7, 16, 19, 30, 31; Lev. xiii. 28. The people in holy convocation and affliction for their transgression and uncleanness, with their sin offering, keep a Sabbath of rest.	II. 1–18. The pressing question of the chosen people of God expressed in terms of the actual need: The word by angels proved steadfast; how shall we escape? (1–4). God the Father did for the need what became him (5–10). The Son of God did what it behoved him to do (11–18).
III.	
Ver. 3, 4, 11. The High Priest, having his offering that betokens his sympathy with the people in infirmity, is habilitated for his functions. Ver. 5. He takes the sin offering of the people. Ver. 12, 13. He enters within the vail and offers incense. Ver. 31. The people keeping Sabbath believe there is still a promise of entering God's rest.	II. 17–iv. 16. Jesus, the Merciful High Priest of our confession, touched with our infirmities (ii. 17, 18; iv. 14, 15). His worth and faithfulness (iii. 1–6). Deceitfulness and penalty of unbelief (iii. 7–19). Exhortation to fear; changing to encouragement to enter God's rest (iv. 1–16).

IV.

Ver. 14. The High Priest enters the vail the second time, and *makes offering of gift and sacrifice* for himself, preparing for offering for the people as one who can bear gently with the ignorant and erring.

IV. 14–v. 10. Jesus, Son of God, our High Priest, touched with our infirmities, *offered up prayers and supplications in view of death;* and being made perfect as Saviour, was of God saluted High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

V.

Ver. 15. The High Priest kills the sin offering of the people, who witness it and remember their ill deserts and also the grace of God.

V. 11–vi. 20. Pause, preparing for the next and great function to be considered. Hearers reproved for unpreparedness (v. 11–14), but invited to press on to adult maturity of knowledge (vi. 1–3). A double incentive to worshipful and believing attention (vi. 3–20): (*a*) Warning, recalling iii. 7–19 and the oath of exclusion from rest (iv. 3–8); (*b*) Encouragement by reference to God's oath of promise to Abraham's faith (vi. 9–18).

VI.

The High Priest only a man, and mortal, and ministers in a temporary sanctuary.

VI. 20–vii. 25. Our Melchizedek High Priest entered heaven a forerunner for us. The greatness of his order of priesthood (vii. 1–10). For perfect salvation sinners need such a different order of priest from the Levitical (vii. 11–25), and need such a high priest in heaven (vii. 26–28).

VII.

Ver. 15–19. The High Priest enters within the vail the third time, with blood of the people's sin offering, and makes atonement for them, and also for the appurtenances of the Holiest, and for the Tabernacle. Then *he cleanses* the altar in the court *with the blood of the bull and of the goat.*

VIII. 1–x. 18. Melchizedek High Priest in his functions. Heaven is his Holies (viii. 1, 2). He has his sacrifice (viii. 3, 4). He has his covenant to minister which has better promises (viii. 5–13). Contrast of the Old and New Covenants in respect to the places of ministering, and to the application of sacrificial blood (ix. 1–28). *Impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to remove sin* (x. 1–4). *Enter the Son*, saying: "I am come to do thy will;" he by one sacrifice perfects forever them that are sanctified, and there is no more offering for sin (x. 8–18).

VIII.

Ver. 20–25. The High Priest lays the sins of the people on the live goat for Azazel, and sends it into the wilderness. He takes off the vesture for this function and bathes in water, and resumes his splendid garments and comes forth.

The people, reconciliation having been made, draw near, while he makes sacrifice for himself and them as their High Priest.

X. 19–39. Exhortation: Having a great priest over the house of God, draw near in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled, and our body washed with pure water, holding fast the confession of our hope, and living as those that have faith unto the saving of the soul.

IX.

XI. 1–40. Examples of faith.

X.

XII. 1–xiii. 25. Exhortation: In view of the examples of faith, run the race with patience, looking to Jesus (xii. 1–13). Follow peace with all men *and* the sanctification (xii. 14–17). The great crisis represented (xii. 18–29). Admonitions (xiii. 1–9).

Epilogue: Our altar offers no worldly emolument. As the bodies of the beasts, whose blood the High Priest brought into the holy place, were burned without the camp, so Jesus suffered without the gate. *Go out of the camp bearing his reproach.* Through him offer continual sacrifice of praise, that is, confession of his name, doing good, obeying spiritual rulers, prayer (xiii. 10–19). Blessing, salutation, benediction (xiii. 18–25).

Ver. 27. While the High Priest inaugurates the sacrifices of another year, and *the congregation stay in the camp* and participate, *the bodies of the bullock and the goat* whose blood was brought into the Holy place *are taken out of the camp and burned.*

The congregation dismissed with the Aaronic blessing (Lev. ix. 22; Num. vi. 22–27).

THE APOCALYPSE OF JOHN.

XX.

THE APOCALYPSE OF JOHN.

By PROF. MILTON S. TERRY, D. D., LL. D.
Of Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill.

THE Revelation of John is the one monumental classic of New Testament prophecy. Although its date places it among the earliest products of Christian literature, the book stands appropriately at the end of the canonical writings, for it is a sublime prophetic portraiture of the consummation of the pre-Messianic age, and the introduction and ultimate triumph of the kingdom of Christ in the world.

The almost unanimous testimony of antiquity ascribes the work to John, the son of Zebedee, the disciple and apostle of Jesus. There are, however, noteworthy objections to this opinion, based mainly on internal evidence. Much can be said on either side of the question, but the value and significance of the prophecy are not dependent on the determination of its authorship.

There are also two different opinions as to the date of the book. An ancient tradition, resting

almost solely on an ambiguous statement of Irenæus, assigns the composition to the latter part of Domitian's reign. But the manner in which the Temple, altar, and court are mentioned in xi. 1–3, and the designation in xi. 8 of the great city as the place where the Lord was crucified, clearly imply that at the time of the writing the city and temple of Jerusalem were yet standing. Another proof of this early date appears in the reference to the seven kings in xvii. 10, the sixth of whom, according to the most popular way of reckoning the Cæsars,[1] would be Nero. The reign of Nero extended from 54 to 68 A. D., and somewhere between these dates we may best place the composition of this Apocalypse. When now we find the most signal and satisfactory explanation of the prophecy in the overthrow of Jerusalem and the consequent triumph of Christianity, we feel the naturalness and force of the words placed in the title of the book, and repeated near the close, that this revelation was of "things which must come to pass shortly." In the destruction of that apostate city, on which he charged the guilt of all the righteous blood from Abel unto Zachariah

[1] (1) Julius, (2) Augustus, (3) Tiberius, (4) Caligula, (5) Claudius. (6) Nero.

(Matt. xxiii. 34–37), the Lord was seen to come quickly and avenge his own elect (Luke xviii. 7, 8). Thus signally "he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned their city" (Matt. xxii. 7.)

A number of recent critics have sought by an ingenious analysis to distribute the contents of this book among several different authors. They find in it what they regard as a mixture of Jewish and Christian elements, and suppose that an older Jewish Apocalypse was wrought over by a Christian hand so that some portions are seen to belong to an early and others to a later date. But this Apocalypse of John exhibits a unity and an artistic symmetry which are incompatible with such a theory of composite authorship. There is scarcely a vision or symbol in the whole book which is not to some extent modelled after something similar in the Old Testament; and this fact, together with the consideration that the author was a Jewish Christian, sufficiently accounts for the alleged mixture of Jewish and Christian elements.

The best defence of the apostolical origin and unity of the Apocalypse is a clear outline of its literary structure, accompanied with such interpretation as may show that the greater portion

refers, in true apocalyptic style, to events which came to pass in the last days of the Jewish metropolis, and prepared the way for the outgoing of the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, as foretold by Isaiah (ii. 3) and Micah (iv. 2). The entire book is divisible into two nearly equal parts, the first of which has three subdivisions and the second seven.

I. The Revelation of the Lamb, Chaps. i.–xi.
   1. In the Epistles to the seven Churches, i.–iii.
   2. In the opening of the seven Seals, iv.–vii.
   3. In the sounding of the seven Trumpets, viii.–xi.

II. The Revelation of the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, chaps. 12–22.
   1. The Woman and the Dragon, xii.
   2. The two Beasts, xiii.
   3. The sevenfold Triumph, xiv.
   4. The seven last Plagues, xv.–xvi.
   5. Babylon the great Harlot, xvii.–xix. 10.
   6. The sevenfold millennial Conflict and Triumph, xix. 11–xxi. 8.
   7. Jerusalem the glorious Bride, xxi. 9–xxii.

The artistic structure of the book is worthy of the author of a great epic poem. After the superscription of verses 1–3, which is of the nature of a titlepage, but ends with a benediction, the writer addresses himself to seven churches of Asia; and verses 4–8 are cast in the form of epistolary saluta-

tion, but rise to the sublimity of prophetic announcement. The mention of reader and hearers in verse 3 contemplates a public reading and a devout assembly, and the tone and style of the author imply a conviction that the words of his prophecy are a genuine revelation from God, to be heeded as much as any book of inspired oracles. They not only testify of things shortly to come to pass, but they are also full of command, warning, exhortation, and promise, which readers and hearers of all times may profitably observe.

The authority of the epistles is further enhanced by the vision of the seven golden candlesticks and the Son of man in the midst of them (verses 9–20). The Christophany is notable for its seven descriptive statements touching the clothing, girdle, head, hair, eyes, feet, and voice of the Lord, as well as for its seven different sayings of the Living One himself (verses 17–20). Each of the seven epistles is cast in a remarkably artificial symmetry of form. There are three main divisions conspicuous in each: (1) The divine Source of the message, designated by one or more of the titles of the Son of man already given in the introductory Christophany; (2) the message itself, beginning in each case with the words "I know;" and (3) the prom-

ise "to him that overcometh." There is also a noticeable correspondence and fitness of these three parts to each other. The characteristic titles of the Lord who speaks appear to have been chosen with reference to the character of the particular church addressed, and the kind of reward promised to the victor. The seven epistles, moreover, are so full of allusion to things which follow in the body of the work that we may naturally suppose them to have been written, as an introductory section, after the rest of the Apocalypse was completed.

The Theophany of chapter iv. is obviously patterned after the lofty ideals found in Isaiah vi. and Ezekiel i. The messages to the seven churches were appropriately introduced by an impressive Christophany, for they embody the special advices of the Son of man to the churches; but the rest of the book is appropriately introduced by a sublime Theophany, an apocalyptic picture of the throne of God, the source of all divine revelation, and of all authority and power in heaven and on earth. The throne and the One sitting thereon, the elders, the four living creatures, the lightnings and voices and thunders, the seven lamps of fire, the glassy sea, the Lamb in the midst of the throne, the sealed book which he

alone can open, and the worship of all creation, are unspeakably impressive as parts of one composite picture.

The mystery of the sealed book, in chapter v., is enhanced in our thought by the weeping of the seer because no man in heaven or earth or under the earth was able to open it or unloose its seals. But when it was announced that the Lion of Judah would open the book, the prophet looked, and lo, instead of a mighty lion, he saw "a Lamb, standing as though it had been slain." He took the sealed book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne, and proceeded to open the seals; and no interpreter should fail to note that after all the seals have been unloosed, and before the last trumpet is sounded, this Lamb is transfigured into a mighty angel, with a rainbow upon his head, his face as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire, and in his hand a little book opened (x. 1). This little book is no other than that which first appeared "close sealed with seven seals." The seals have all been opened now, and the volume of mystery has become "a little book," which the angel gives to John to eat as Ezekiel ate the roll (Ezek. iii. 1–3), a word of prophecy for "many peoples and nations and tongues and kings" (x. 11).

No poet or painter has surpassed the inimitable apocalypse of this mystery of the seven seals. It has always been readily seen that the seventh seal issues in the sounding of the seven trumpets; but readers have been slow to see that the sealed book of chapter v. is also the opened book of chapter x. The seals and trumpets form one great series of visions, but the mystery of the trumpets is an apocalyptic repetition of the woes and signs of the seventh seal. The first four seals are closely related, and symbolize the war, bloodshed, famine, and death which preceded and attended the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies. These woes answer to the wars, famines, terrors, and earthquakes which the Lord himself foretold as a beginning of travail-pangs (Matt. xxiv. 8). Such world-judgments are, in apocalyptic pictures, usually set in groups of four. Compare the four sore judgments in Ezekiel xiv. 21, the fourfold locust plague of Joel i. 4, and the four chariots of Zechariah vi. 1–8.

The fifth and sixth seals form together a striking contrast, as if answering one to the other. The cry of the martyr-souls under the altar, like Abel's blood-drops crying from the ground (Gen. iv. 10), is answered in the symbols of the wrath of the

Lamb, which immediately (comp. Matt. xxiv. 29) follow upon the opening of the sixth seal. Between the sixth and seventh seals we have by way of episode a double vision of the sealing and salvation of the servants of God. It is one of a series of pictures of heavenly triumph, which the author is in the habit of placing between appalling scenes of woe. Another example occurs in xi. 3–12, where the triumphant ascension of the two witnesses comes in between the sixth and seventh trumpets. Another is seen in the hundred and forty-four thousand with the Lamb on Mount Zion, and the proclamation of the gospel, between the persecutions of the two beasts and the fall of Babylon the great. Again, in xv. 2–4, we have the victorious company singing the song of Moses and the Lamb between the scenes of the bloody winepress and the seven last plagues. Finally, between the binding and imprisonment of Satan and his release for a last war against the saints, we have the vision of the enthroned martyrs who live and reign with Christ a thousand years. This feature of the book cannot reasonably be regarded as accidental, but rather designed both for artistic effect and religious encouragement.

Upon the opening of the seventh seal there

issues the sounding of the seven trumpets. The general thought that runs through this section appears to have been suggested by the seven trumpets which sounded the fall of Jericho. As that great Canaanitish city must needs fall before the promised land could be possessed, so must the great city where the Lord was crucified be overthrown before the kingdom of the world could become the possession of Christ (xi. 15). The first four trumpets, like the first four seals, form a class by themselves. At the fifth trumpet "the pit of the abyss" was opened, and from its rising smoke, which darkened sun and air, came forth a host of tormenting locusts, whose king bears the symbolic name Abaddon, or Apollyon, the destroyer. These are the devil and his angels, powers of Hell, let loose upon that wicked generation, as Jesus had significantly foretold (Matt. xii. 43–45). The highly wrought picture evinces the bold genius of the author, and explains the demoniacal infatuation of the Jewish leaders, of whom Josephus says: "I suppose that had the Romans made any longer delay in coming against these villains, the city would either have been swallowed up by the ground opening upon them, or been overwhelmed by water, or else been destroyed by

such thunder as the country of Sodom perished by; for it had brought forth a generation of men much more atheistical than were those that suffered such punishments; for by their madness it was that all the people came to be destroyed." [1]

The imagery of the fifth trumpet is taken largely from Joel's picture of the fourfold plague of locusts (Joel i. 4–6), and that of the sixth corresponds to Joel ii. 1–11, where we find a thrilling description of a rushing army of horsemen, spreading fiery destruction before them and behind them. The imagery of the sixth trumpet (ix. 13–21) is an apocalyptic painting of "the abomination of desolation," which in the form of Roman armies, as a comparison of Matt. xxiv. 15 and Luke xxi. 20 shows, compassed Jerusalem, and foreshadowed the bitter end. Their coming from "the great river Euphrates" is a symbolic allusion to the well-known fact that from that region came the great armies, which of old, like rods of Jehovah's anger (Isa. x. 5), smote the land of Israel.

As between the sixth and seventh seals there was an interlude, with the vision of the sealing of the elect Israel of God, so between the sixth and seventh trumpets we have another interlude, in

[1] Whiston's Josephus, *Wars*, book v. chap. xiii. 6.

which a mighty angel descends from heaven, declares that there shall be no more delay, and gives the mystic book, with all its seals now opened, to be eaten by the seer. The measuring of "the temple of God and them that worship therein" (xi. 1), is a symbolizing of that "remnant according to the election of grace," which was destined to survive the catastrophe of Judaism, and become the nucleus of the new Church and kingdom of heaven. Thus preserved from the impending ruin, this living temple is again seen, after the sounding of the last trumpet, to be "opened in heaven," and to contain the long-lost ark of the covenant (xi. 19). The description of the two witnesses (xi. 3–12) is also a symbolizing of the sure triumph of those who overcame the great adversary and accuser "because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony, and who loved not their life even unto death (xii. 11). By thus placing important events in an interlude before the sounding of the last trumpet, our author displays the genius of the great tragedians and epic poets, who bring in by way of episode beforehand whatever may serve to deepen the impressiveness of the final scene. So when he comes to make record of the last woe,

its sublimity is enhanced by the brevity and far-reaching significance of his statements (xi. 14–19). "Great voices in heaven" announce that the kingdom of the world has become the Lord's. The glorious "Temple of God which is in the heaven" is the same as the New Jerusalem, and its fuller description is reserved for the grand finale of the Apocalypse. That golden city is the ultimate reality which the Temple only symbolized, and John accordingly "saw no temple therein, for the Lord God, the Almighty and the Lamb, are the temple thereof" (xxi. 22). Those who dwell in God need no other temple, any more than they need the light of the sun or the moon.

The second part of the Apocalypse is not a chronological sequel to the first, but bears the same relation to it that Daniel's vision of the four empires and the kingdom of the saints bears to Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image and the stone cut out of the mountain without hands. Such apocalyptic repetition, like the duplicate dreams of Joseph and of Pharaoh, serves to deepen the impression, and give assurance that the matter is established of God, and destined shortly to come to pass (Gen. xli. 32).

The first part is more especially a revelation of the Lamb of God under various symbols, glorious in wisdom and power, opening the book of divine mysteries, avenging the martyred saints, and disclosing the fearful judgments about to come upon the enemies of God. Everything is viewed as from the throne of the King of heaven, who sends forth his armies, destroys the murderers of his prophets, and burns up their city (Matt. xxii. 7). The second part is rather a revelation of the Church in conflict with the hosts of wickedness, persecuted by the civil power, but surviving all opposition, triumphing by the word of her testimony, and, after the fall of Babylon the harlot, appearing as New Jerusalem the bride, glorious in beauty and imperishable as the throne of God. Accordingly, we see in the great red dragon of xii. 3 another symbol of the angel of the abyss (ix. 11). The one hundred and forty-four thousand on Mount Zion (xiv. 1) are another presentation of the elect Israel of vii. 4–8. The seven last plagues are a varied duplicate of the seven trumpets of woe. The mystic Babylon, mother of harlots and abominations, is the same as the Sodom and Egypt where the Lord was crucified (xi. 8). The enthroned martyrs are the same as the two witnesses

who were seen caught up into heaven, but in the later picture they are seen to live and reign with Christ a thousand years. The New Jerusalem is a varied and elaborate symbol of "the temple of God which is in the heaven" (xi. 19).

Our space will not allow a detailed comment on all this complex symbolism, but we may briefly observe that the vision of the woman and the dragon is a symbol of the New Testament Zion in travail with her children (comp. Isa. lxvi. 7). The woman represents the apostolic Church, and the man child born of her is not an individual only but a collective body, the children of "the Jerusalem which is above," and which Paul calls "our mother" (Gal. iv. 26). The dragon is the old adversary of God and his people, "he that is called the Devil and Satan," and his standing before the woman, ready to devour her child as soon as born, is an image appropriated from Pharaoh's attitude towards the sons of Israel (Ex. i. 16). The entire picture is an effective portrayal of the early Church in mortal conflict with the powers of darkness, "the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. vi. 12).

Having failed in the heavenly places, and being cast down to the earth, the dragon is next seen to

give his power and throne and great authority to a monstrous beast that rises out of the sea (xiii. 1, 2). This monster is a symbol of the Roman empire as a persecuting power, and the reigning emperor is for the time impersonated in the beast. And so this beast is not the city of Rome, as many vainly think, but the empire and emperor conceived as the ferocious agent of the old serpent to persecute the scattered saints of God. The second beast that "comes up out of the land" is a subordinate and satellite of the first beast, and a symbol of the provincial governments, which were required to execute the orders of the emperor. They held from him the power of life and death over their subjects. Pliny's famous letter to Trajan shows how the proconsuls enforced the worship of the empire in the image of the reigning emperor. "The number of the beast" (xiii. 18) is found in the numerical value of the Hebrew letters which spell the name of Nero Cæsar.

The sevenfold revelation of chapter xiv. presents a series of encouraging contrasts to the preceding symbols of antichrist. They are followed by the vision of the seven bowls of wrath, which so strikingly correspond to the seven woe-trumpets. Next follows the vision of Babylon the great, the

murderess of the prophets (comp. Matt. xxiii. 37, and Luke xiii. 33), a symbol of the apostate church of the old covenant, which was then "nigh unto vanishing away" (Heb. viii. 13). The imagery of chapters xvii. and xviii. is taken mainly from Ezekiel's allegory of the same city, with whom Jehovah had entered into covenant, but who played the harlot with many a stranger (see Ezek. chs. xvi., xxii., and xxiii.). The overthrow of the faithless city is followed by another sevenfold vision of triumph, symbolizing the coming and kingdom of Christ (xix. 11–xxi. 8). Each of these seven visions begins with the formula "and I saw," and the whole section is in striking correspondent contrast with that of the seven last plagues, which issued in the fall of Babylon the harlot. The last of those seven was accompanied with a voice from heaven which said, "It is done," and Babylon was judged. The last of these seven is accompanied with another voice from the throne which says, "They are done," and all things are made new (comp. xvi. 17 and xxi. 6). The entire period of millennial conflict and triumph is here outlined in one group of pictures, and the seer beholds it as a unit, and makes no attempt to foretell details of history.

Then comes the last great vision, the gorgeous portraiture of the New Jerusalem, the Lamb's wife, arrayed in all the glory of her Lord. A comparison of xvii. 1 and xxi. 9 shows that this elaborate symbol, like that of the mystic Babylon, was revealed to John by one of the angels who had the seven bowls. This highly wrought picture has its Old Testament parallel in the closing chapters of Ezekiel (xl.–xlviii.), who, like John, was taken up "upon a very high mountain" (xl. 2) to behold the future glory of Israel. The New Jerusalem is a symbol of the "Church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven" (Heb. xii. 23). It is composed of that great multitude in earth and heaven who are conceived in the New Testament as already "risen along with Christ" (Col. iii. 1). For such exalted saints, death has no sting. According to John xi. 26 he who lives and believes in Christ shall never die. His life is hidden with Christ in God, and so, in the profoundest sense, the temple, in which he dwells and worships forever, is "the Lord God, the Almighty and the Lamb" (Rev. xxi. 22; comp. 1 John iv. 16). The entire Church is thus conceived as the living body of Christ, and all ideals of triumph and glory which the Hebrew prophets

associated with Messiah's reign are included in the New Testament Church and kingdom of God. "They shall see his face; his name shall be on their foreheads, and they shall reign for ever and ever."

The Revelation of John thus proves itself to be a most artistic and finished prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem and the introduction of Christianity into the world. The visions of Christian triumph have their natural and necessary outlook into future ages of ages, but the prophecy of this book, taken as a whole, refers to things which, in the apostolic age, were shortly to come to pass.

As a literary composition, the Apocalypse must be awarded a very high place. It contains the elements of a great epic, and its elaborate structure has, by the inimitable art and genius of the author, appropriated nearly all its imagery from the Old Testament, and wrought it over to suit a purpose strikingly original. It is an old saying that "not every collection of straws makes a bird's nest." The highest genius may be displayed in the fresh setting of facts or ideals old as time. So, while the language and style of this book are often rough and Hebraistic, the thoughts are of the highest order, and its main subject is the grandest event

of human history. In spite of the aberrations of exegesis to which it has been subjected, all classes of readers have ever been impressed with its magnificent descriptions, as well as with its profound conceptions of religious truth.

THE INFLUENCE OF BIBLICAL UPON MODERN ENGLISH LITERATURE.

XXI.

THE INFLUENCE OF BIBLICAL UPON MODERN ENGLISH LITERATURE.

By ALBERT S. COOK, Ph. D., L. H. D.
Professor of the English Language and Literature in Yale University.

EARLY in the year 1811, a boy of eighteen, a student of Oxford, afterwards to become famous, wrote a pamphlet entitled "The Necessity of Atheism," in which occurs the following remarkable sentence: "From this it is evident that, having no proofs from any of the three sources of conviction, the mind *cannot* believe in the existence of a God." Two years after, when he had scarcely attained his majority, the young poet — no one needs to be told that it was Shelley — gave utterance to a no less astounding observation: "The genius of human happiness must tear every leaf from the accursed book of God, ere man can read the inscription on his heart." Scarcely eight years after this he had completed his best prose work, "A Defense of Poetry," toward the close

of which he thus pays a seemingly unconscious tribute to the very Book of God which he had stigmatized as "accursed" (the italics are mine): "It is inconsistent with this division of our subject to cite living poets, but posterity has done ample justice to the great names now referred to. *Their errors have been weighed and found to have been dust in the balance; if their sins were as scarlet, they are now white as snow; they have been washed in the blood of the mediator and redeemer, Time.*" If Shelley, who had wished to tear every leaf from the Bible, cannot yet tear it out of the very heart of his own writing, and derives his highest eloquence from allusions to three or four of its most sublime and affecting passages, this of itself would almost constitute a demonstration of the influence exerted by the Bible upon modern English literature.

Shakespeare is often thought of as a child of the Renaissance, and in so far a pagan, yet one would search long among professedly religious writers before finding a tenderer allusion to the Passion of our Lord than the one that occurs at the very beginning of "King Henry IV., Part I.": —

> "Therefore, friends,
> As far as to the sepulchre of Christ,

Whose soldier now, under whose blessed cross
We are impressèd and engaged to fight,
Forthwith a power of English we shall levy,
To chase these pagans in those holy fields
Over whose acres walked those blessed feet
Which fourteen hundred years ago were nailed
For our advantage on the bitter cross."

The beautiful passage on Christmas Eve in "Hamlet," Act I., Scene 1, is to the same effect. But perhaps it may be thought that these selections, convincing as they may be with respect to Shakespeare's reverential spirit, afford no proof of his familiar acquaintance with Scripture. What, then, shall we think of these? In "As You Like It" (II., 3, 43–45), Adam says to Orlando: —

"Take that, and *He that doth the ravens feed,*
Yea, providently caters for the sparrow,
Be comfort to my age!"

Where, in the same number of words, has there been a better exposition of the fifth petition in the Lord's Prayer than in Portia's appeal for mercy? —

"We do pray for mercy;
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy."

In "Richard III." (II., 3, 11) there is almost a literal quotation of Eccles. x. 16: —

"Woe to the land that 's governed by a child!"

One of the best-known lines in Hamlet's soliloquy is very probably indebted to Job x. 21; I refer to

> "The undiscovered country *from whose bourn*
> *No traveller returns.*"

In "King Henry IV., Part II." (I., 3, 41–62) there is an extended amplification of Luke xiv. 28, 29, which is worth a careful examination. But perhaps as manifest an indication of Shakespeare's acquaintance with the phraseology, no less than with the spirit, of the Bible is to be found in the reply of Helena to the King ("All's Well," II., 1, 139–144), in which we recognize 1 Cor. i. 27; Matt. xxi. 16; Exod. xvii. 6, and Exod. xiv. 21, all at once: —

> "He that of greatest works is finisher
> Oft does them by the weakest minister:
> So Holy Writ in babes hath judgment shown,
> When judges have been babes; great floods have flown
> From simple sources, and great seas have dried
> When miracles have by the greatest been denied."

In the same golden age of literature to which Shakespeare belonged — an age which, beyond most others, honored the name and character of gentleman — lived Thomas Dekker, whose characterization of Christ as the first true gentleman is not likely to be soon forgotten: —

"The best of men
That e'er wore earth about him was a sufferer;
A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit,
The first true gentleman that ever breathed."

Passing over two centuries of English literature, and, scattered throughout them, a host of religious writers, for whom the names of George Herbert, Milton, Bunyan, and Cowper may stand, we come to our own times; and here we are fairly embarrassed by the multitude of illustrations that might be given, the most of them from authors not classed as religious, and whom the generality of readers would think of as distinguished rather by purely literary qualities.

Take two of the most notable poetesses of the century, Mrs. Browning and Jean Ingelow. No one who has read the nine stanzas composed by the former on the theme of Ps. cxxvii. 2, and entitled "The Sleep," can have been insensible to their inwardness, their serenity, their charm. A single stanza may serve as an example: —

"His dews drop mutely on the hill,
His cloud above it saileth still,
Though on its slope men sow and reap.
More softly than the dew is shed,
Or cloud is floated overhead,
'He giveth his beloved sleep.'"

Another of Mrs. Browning's poems which is saturated with Scripture is "A Drama of Exile." Jean Ingelow often draws rich and strange harmonies from her Biblical borrowings, and it would be hard to say whether, in these adaptations, she gives or receives more. Perhaps the strongest and most sustained of her imaginative poems is "The Story of Doom," a poetic conception of the state of things which preceded the Deluge, while Noah was building the ark. The epilogue of "The Dreams that came True" is merely a set of splendid variations on Isa. xxxv. 1; and Isa. xiv. 18 is most impressively used in "A Dead Year," of which this is the first stanza: —

> "I took a year out of my life and story —
> A dead year, and said, 'I will hew thee a tomb!
> "All the kings of the nations lie in glory;"
> Cased in cedar, and shut in a sacred gloom;
> Swathed in linen, and precious unguents old;
> Painted with cinnabar, and rich with gold.'"

Another piece, among her very finest, is "Brothers, and a Sermon," in which thrilling effects are obtained by the recurrence of the phrase, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

In the same spirit writes Swinburne, who is not usually thought of as a pattern of devotion. Here

is a stanza from his "Christmas Antiphones," containing an evident allusion to Mark xiv. 7: —

> "Yet Thy poor endure,
> And are with us yet;
> Be Thy name a sure
> Refuge for Thy poor
> Whom men's eyes forget."

Among the prose writers of this and the last generation, none, I suppose, would be placed much higher than Carlyle and Ruskin; and certainly no poets would rank ahead of Tennyson and Browning. All these writers so abound in their knowledge and use of the Bible that single specimens from each will suffice. In Carlyle's "Past and Present," Book III. Chap. XI., there is an extended simile drawn from Judges vi. 37, 38: "In very truth, for every noble work the possibilities will lie diffused through Immensity; inarticulate, undiscoverable except to faith. Like Gideon thou shalt spread out thy fleece at the door of thy tent; see whether under the wide arch of Heaven there be any bounteous moisture, or none. Thy heart and life-purpose shall be as a miraculous Gideon's fleece, spread out in silent appeal to Heaven; and from the kind Immensities, what from the poor unkind Localities and town and

country Parishes there never could, blessed dew-moisture to suffice thee shall have fallen."

Ruskin is fond of ringing the changes on some Scripture text at the end of a chapter or a book. I quote two examples, the first being from the end of "Sesame and Lilies": "And then, indeed, shall abide for them and for us an incorruptible felicity and an infallible religion; shall abide for us Faith, no more to be assailed by temptation, no more to be defended by wrath and by fear; — shall abide with us Hope, no more to be quenched by the years that overwhelm, or made ashamed by the shadows that betray; shall abide for us, and with us, the greatest of these; the abiding will, the abiding name, of our Father. For the greatest of these, is Charity." The other, forming the closing sentences of "The Seven Lamps of Architecture," is based upon Gen. xix. 23: "There is something ominous in the light which has enabled us to look back with disdain upon the ages among whose lovely vestiges we have been wandering. I could smile when I hear the hopeful exultation of many at the new reach of worldly science, and vigor of worldly effort; as if we were again at the beginning of days. There is thunder on the horizon as well as dawn. The sun was

risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar." The following, however, which is built upon Matt. vi. 34, and Ps. xix. 5, is from the very middle of a paragraph ("Crown of Wild Olive," Lecture I.): "Well, that's the great worker's character. Taking no thought for the morrow; taking thought only for the duty of the day; trusting somebody else to take care of to-morrow; knowing indeed what labor is, but not what sorrow is; and always ready for play — beautiful play — for lovely human play is like the play of the Sun. There's a worker for you. He, steady to his time, is set as a strong man to run his course, but, also, he *rejoiceth* as a strong man to run his course."

Browning uses Scripture somewhat as Carlyle does — intent upon his main theme, and introducing the Biblical allusion in an illustrative way. In that lovely poem, "By the Fireside," when his hero's love is at its spiritual height, Browning thus makes him address his wife, in phrases which remind one of Rev. xxi. 5 (perhaps also 2 Cor. v. 17), and 2 Cor. v. 1: —

> "Think, when our one soul understands
> The great Word which makes all things new,
> When earth breaks up and heaven expands,
> How will the change strike me and you
> In the house not made with hands?"

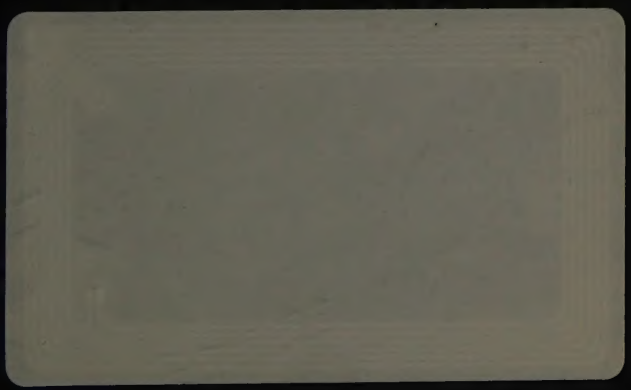
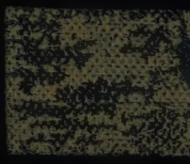
Of Tennyson it may be sufficient to say that Dr. Van Dyke, in his book, "The Poetry of Tennyson," has a list of the poet's Biblical quotations and allusions which covers twenty-four pages. Every one will remember, in "In Memoriam," the imaginative treatment of the resurrection of Lazarus. Characteristic of Tennyson's natural bent, but not admitted by him into the poem for which they were composed — "The Palace of Art" — are these two stanzas, alluding to 1 Kings xviii. 27, and descriptive of a statue of Elijah: —

"One was the Tishbite whom the raven fed,
As when he stood on Carmel steeps,
With one arm stretched out bare, and mocked and said,
'Come, cry aloud — he sleeps!'

"Tall, eager, lean, and strong, his cloak wind-borne
Behind, his forehead heavenly-bright,
From the clear marble pouring glorious scorn,
Lit as with inner light."

In another place[1] I have said: "The Bible has been an active force in English literature for over twelve hundred years, and during that whole period it has been molding the diction of representative thinkers and literary artists. Forced into rivalry with other models, it has struggled against them,

[1] The Bible and English Prose Style, p. xi.

— now vanquished for the moment, now sharing with its competitors the trophies of conquest, and now sole master of the field, yet always most powerful when the national life was most intense, and scarcely ever so baffled but that some signs of its authority are manifest." To this I now add: It would be worth while to read the Bible carefully and repeatedly, if only as a key to modern culture, for to those who are unfamiliar with its teachings and its diction much that is best in the English literature of the present century is as a sealed book.

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